

BATTALION/TASK FORCE IN RETROGRADE OPERATION

Subcourse Number IN0813

Edition A

United States Army Infantry School

Fort Benning, Georgia 31905-5593

5 Credit Hours

SUBCOURSE OVERVIEW

This subcourse is designed to teach the infantry officer the purpose and planning considerations for battalion task force retrograde operations, including the techniques for preparing related orders.

There are no prerequisites for this subcourse.

This subcourse reflects the doctrine that was current at the time it was prepared. In your own work situation, always use the latest publication.

The words "he," "him," "his," and "men," when used in this publication, represent both the masculine and feminine unless otherwise stated.

TERMINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Action: Identify the purposes of, and planning considerations for, retrograde operations; the nature of the Soviet threat to U.S. forces conducting retrograde operations; identify planning considerations and procedures, and operational methods and techniques for conducting retrograde operations.

Condition: Given the subcourse material contained in this subcourse.

Standard: To demonstrate competency of this subcourse, you will achieve a minimum of 70 percent on the subcourse examination.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Subcourse Overview

Lesson 1: The Purposes of, and Planning Procedures for, Retrograde Operations and the nature of the Soviet threat to U.S. Forces Conducting Retrograde Operations

Learning Event 1: Identify the Purposes of, and Planning Considerations for, Retrograde Operations

Learning Event 2: Identify the nature of the Soviet threat to U.S. Forces Conducting Retrograde Operations

Practice Exercise

Lesson 2: Planning and Conducting Retrograde Operations

Learning Event 1: Identify the planning Considerations and Procedures, and Operational Methods and Techniques for Conducting Delay Operations

Learning Event 2: Identify the Planning Considerations and Procedures, and Operational Methods and Techniques for Conducting Withdrawal and Retirement Operations

Learning Event 3: Identify the Circumstances, Formats, Contents, and Procedures for Preparing and Issuing Task Force Warning Orders and Operations Orders for a Delay Operation

Practice Exercise

Lesson 1

THE PURPOSE OF, AND PLANNING PROCEDURES FOR, RETROGRADE OPERATIONS; AND THE NATURE OF THE SOVIET THREAT TO U.S. FORCES CONDUCTING RETROGRADE OPERATIONS

Lesson Description:

This lesson discusses the purposes of, and planning considerations for, retrograde operations. The battalion task force conducts these operations as part of offensive and defensive operations.

Terminal Learning Objective:

Action: Identify the purposes of, and planning considerations for, retrograde operations; and the nature of the Soviet threat to U.S. forces conducting retrograde operations.

Condition: Given the subcourse material contained in this lesson.

Standard: The student will demonstrate his comprehension and knowledge of the task by identifying the purposes of, and planning considerations for, retrograde operations; and the nature of the Soviet threat to U.S. forces conducting retrograde operations.

The material in this lesson was derived from the following publications:

References: [FM 71-2](#)
FM 100-2-1
[FM 100-5](#)

INTRODUCTION

A retrograde operation is an organized movement to the rear or away from the enemy. It may be either forced or voluntary. In either case, the higher commander must approve it.

Forces conduct retrograde operations to harass, to exhaust, to resist, to delay, and to damage the enemy. Such operations gain time, avoid combat under unfavorable conditions, or draw the enemy into an unfavorable position.

Retrograde actions are also favorable in maneuver to reposition forces, to shorten lines of communications, or to permit the use of the force elsewhere.

Learning Event 1:

IDENTIFY THE PURPOSES OF, AND PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS FOR, RETROGRADE OPERATIONS

Because of the similarities between defensive and retrograde operations in planning procedures and considerations, this lesson will begin with a brief discussion of the defense. This will provide a transitional context which will facilitate the understanding of the main subject of the subcourse Retrograde Operations.

PLANNING FOR THE DEFENSE

Planning for defense begins when a commander receives a mission to defend or perceives a need to do so. The commander then formulates a plan for defense which meets the requirements of the mission. The commander is guided in the design of his plan by the factors of METT-T, and the considerations he develops in his estimate of the situation.

METT-T

As mentioned above, METT-T is the guide used by commanders in designing defensive plans. The elements of METT-T are:

- Mission.
- Enemy.
- Terrain and weather.
- Troops.
- Time available.

Each element will be discussed separately.

Mission. The first consideration in planning the defense is the mission. It defines the area to be defended or the force to be defeated. It must be analyzed in terms of the higher commander's overall scheme.

Defending broad frontages forces the commander to accept gaps. Defending shallow sectors or positions reduces flexibility and requires the commander to fight well forward. Narrow frontages and deep sectors increase the elasticity of the defense and the number of options available. In planning his defense, the commander also considers subsequent missions.

Enemy. In planning the defense, the commander must consider the enemy's doctrine, habits, equipment, and probable courses of action. Defending commanders must look at themselves and their sectors through the enemy commander's eyes. They must look for vulnerabilities that the enemy may exploit and must act to counter them. They should also identify probable enemy objectives and approaches to them.

- In a defense against an echelons enemy, they must know how soon follow-on forces can join the attack. If enemy follow-on forces can be delayed, the attack may be defeated in detail one echelon at a time. If the defender can force the enemy to commit follow-on echelons sooner than planned, the

attacker's timetable can be upset. This will create exploitable gaps between the committed and subsequent echelons.

Terrain and Weather. The defending force must exploit any aspect of the terrain that impairs enemy momentum or makes it difficult for him to mass or maneuver. Defenders must engage the attacker at points where the terrain puts him at the greatest disadvantage. Controlling key terrain is vital to a successful defense. Some terrain may be so significant to the defense that its loss would prove decisive.

Weather and visibility affect how defenders organize the ground. Commanders at all levels must take these effects into account as they analyze terrain. The defending commander should use man-made obstacles to improve the natural structure of terrain. This will slow or canalize enemy movement and protect friendly positions and maneuver.

Troops. The commander must also consider the nature of his force. The mobility, protection, morale, and training of his troops determine to some extent how he will defend. Armor and mechanized forces can move on the battlefield even under artillery fire, while infantry cannot. Light infantry can fight effectively in close terrain and urban areas which limit mounted units.

Differences in mobility, training, and leadership make some units more suitable for some missions than for others. Commanders should consider the relative strengths of their units and personnel. Skill in night combat, infiltration, long-range fires, or air assault operation gives the defender an advantage over the attacker. The commander should exploit these skills in designing his defense.

Time Available. The amount of time to prepare is a crucial factor in organizing a defense. For an effective defense, time must be available for:

- Conducting reconnaissance.
- Occupation of positions.
- Fortifying the ground.
- Fire planning.
- Installing obstacles.
- Coordination of support.

To gain time for the organization of the main battle area (MBA), the commander may order a delay by a covering force. Lack of time may cause a commander to maintain a larger-than-normal reserve force or to accept greater risks than usual. Time is a critical element for the defender and cannot be wasted. Small units must be capable of defense with minimal preparation, but commanders must recognize that strong defenses take time to organize and prepare.

Defensive Planning steps

Using the elements of METT-T, the commander develops his plans for the defensive operation. The defensive planning process can be simplified by following a seven-step guide. The commander can use these steps with the troop-leading procedures and the decision-making process to make and refine the tentative plan. These steps are:

- Analyze the brigade mission and begin preparations.
- Analyze enemy avenues of approach.
- Select tentative positions and tasks.
- Allocate forces.
- Task organize and assign missions.
- Integrate combat support.
- Finish the plan.

Analyze the Brigade Mission and Begin Preparations. The defensive planning process begins with a complete analysis of the brigade order to identify both the brigade commander's intent and mission of tasks the task force is expected to execute. As soon as possible, the task force commander gathers his staff, is briefed on the combat status of the task force, and gives planning guidance to his staff. He issues instructions or approves recommendations from the staff. He may direct beginning preparations of key obstacles or the establishment of security.

Planning the effective use of time to complete the plan is especially important. The warning order is issued as early as possible. It includes, as a minimum the nature of the mission, the time the mission starts or earliest time of movement, and the time and place of issuance of orders. Additional information is sent to the units as soon as it becomes available.

Analyze Enemy Avenues of Approach. The S2 identifies mounted, dismounted, and aerial approaches into the battalion's sector, both from the front and the flank. He does this by first identifying enemy mobility corridors two levels down. He then combines these corridors to determine likely avenues of approach. Regimental and sometimes battalion-sized mounted avenues of approach are normally identified by the brigade. The battalion refines this analysis to determine all battalion- and company-sized mounted and dismounted avenues of approach. They identify locations along the avenues of approach where the enemy is most vulnerable. They also identify key terrain which dominates the defensive area.

Select Tentative Positions and Tasks. The battalion task force commander selects terrain within the battle position (BP) or throughout the sector for:

- Positioning antiarmor weapons and/or obstacles.
- Positioning maneuver elements to place fires onto the enemy avenues of approach, or to counterattack.
- Blocking the avenues of approach where they are most restricted.

The commander wargames positions down to the platoon level. One critical consideration in selecting positions is how the positions appear to the enemy. Commanders at all levels should reconnoiter friendly defensive positions from the avenue of approach. They should check the positions from the enemy's viewpoint. They avoid selection of positions that are too obvious, such as prominent hill

masses and/or tree lines as defensive positions, if possible. They reconnoiter friendly positions and counterattack routes before and after occupation, from the enemy's point of view.

Allocate Forces. Allocate forces based on the analysis of the avenue of approach, potential positions, and predicted enemy actions. Select the best areas to defeat the attack consistent with the brigade commander's intent. Determine the best combination of positions to stop, counterattack, and destroy the enemy in all of those areas. Then select the positions in depth to meet the need for mutual support and coverage of all avenues of approach.

Allocate forces to the positions selected. Other positions will become on-order missions for units. Allocate tanks, Bradley infantry fighting vehicles (BIFVs), and improved TOW vehicles (ITVs) to positions selected for placing antiarmor fire on the enemy. Position tanks and some infantry to counterattack. Allocate dismounted mechanized infantry and obstacles to positions which block approaches in restricted terrain with short-range fields of fire.

Select the correct combination to break up the attacker's formation and stop the enemy in a "killing zone." Here, he is exposed to antiarmor fires from multiple directions.

Task Organize and Assign Missions. Group the tentative platoon positions into company team-sized battle positions or sectors. Assign a company or company team to each position or sector. Determine the missions each company team is to accomplish from these positions. Also, determine the requirements for maneuver of forces and fires as the battle develops.

Integrate Combat Support. Ensure that fire support, air defense artillery (ADA), mobility, countermobility, and survivability systems are planned to support this scheme of maneuver. Supporting fires are planned to disorganize, slow, and disrupt the enemy's advance; to assist in blocking attacks; and to cover maneuver. Finalize engineer support for construction of obstacles to canalize and hold the enemy in areas where he is most vulnerable. Also, plan obstacles to protect defensive positions from assault. Priority is given to the construction of fighting positions to protect the fighting force and to the improvement of routes needed to execute the scheme of maneuver.

Finish the Plan. The concept of the operation is now complete. Now the commander and his staff must determine the additional taskings and coordination needed to make the concept work. Actions must be taken to compensate for any disadvantages associated with the chosen course of action. They must develop plans for fire control, combat service support, surveillance, obstacle emplacement, and communications support. Also, they must determine if any additional control and coordination measures are required.

The above paragraphs have explained the steps in planning a defense. Let's now take each step of planning the defense and break it down in detail.

STEP 1: ANALYZE THE BRIGADE MISSION AND BEGIN PREPARATIONS

Battalion task force missions are given by brigade orders- warning orders (WOs), fragmentary orders (FRAGOs), or operations orders (OPORDs). These orders tell the task force:

- What it is to do.
- Where to do it.

- When to do it.
- What attachments to do it with.
- How it will contribute to the overall operation.
- How brigade maneuver and combat support forces will be synchronized.
- How combat service support will be provided.

The initial defense orders will often be written, with detailed, well-defined control and coordination measures and contingency plans. They will normally be given face-to-face. Orders given during the battle may be fragmentary and are often given over secure radio.

AirLand Battle defensive doctrine emphasizes maneuver during the battle to attack enemy weaknesses. Therefore, careful analysis of the brigade order is necessary. In addition to analysis of the specified and implied tasks, the commander must determine the intent and the resultant maneuver required to accomplish the intent.

Examples of key questions which impact on task force planning follow:

- Is decisive engagement to be accepted or is freedom of maneuver to be maintained?
- How are the brigade and division going to create enemy weaknesses? How and with what forces are they going to attack it?
- How are counterattacks to be coordinated with, or supported by, forward forces?
- How is the task force to tie-in with adjacent units?
- Is there key terrain which the overall scheme requires to be retained?

Defensive Missions

The general defensive missions are to defend and to counterattack.

Defend. The task force may be required to:

- Defend in sector. This mission given the task force the mission of defeating the attacker forward of the rear boundary. The task force may fight the battle utilizing the entire depth of the sector. This must be consistent with the intent of the brigade commander and the need to tie-in with adjacent units.
- Defend a battle position. Battle positions are general locations from which the task forces can be ordered to block an avenue of approach. Other uses for battle positions are for firing into an assigned area, retaining key terrain, or performing other assigned tasks.
- Defend a strong point. A strong point is an extensively fortified battle position which holds or controls key terrain or blocks an avenue of approach.
- Delay. A delay is a defensive operation where the main intent is to slow the enemy's advance. A delay is normally conducted in sector. It may be unrestricted with maximum possible delay while avoiding decisive engagement. The delay may also be restricted. This is where the enemy

advance must be delayed for a specified length of time even if decisive engagement is necessary to accomplish the delay.

(Note: Delay is a retrograde operation which will be discussed later in greater detail.)

Counterattack. The types of counterattack operations are:

- Counterattack by fire. This involves movement to a position to destroy the attacker by fire. Battle positions and routes are normally assigned.
- Counterattack by fire and movement. The intent is to close with and destroy the enemy or to capture key terrain. Offensive control measures are assigned. Objectives may be assigned for orientation purposes only.

Preparation

Levels of preparation for defense and counterattack missions are to occupy, prepare, and recon.

Occupy. In positions initially occupied, the company team must accomplish all actions necessary to execute the mission assigned. However, preparation and recon of on-order missions often must be done concurrently if a dynamic battle of maneuver is planned.

Prepare. The element must accomplish all actions necessary to prepare for execution of the assigned mission. This may include (depending on the mission assigned):

- Full planning, coordination, and rehearsals for counterattacks by fire and movement.
- Construction of firing positions and routes.
- Emplacement of target reference points (TRPs).
- Development of fire plans.
- Selection of security positions.
- Emplacement of hasty protective obstacles.
- Clearance of fields of fire.
- Prestocking of ammunition and supplies.
- Construction of individual fighting positions.
- Developing the final protective fire (FPF) plan.
- Emplacement of wire communications.

"Prepare" missions are normally critical to the defense. A unit assigned a "prepare" mission is expected to maintain security on the position and routes to it. Rapid movement and execution are vital to the success of the mission.

Recon. This level involves the complete coordination and planning for the mission. Leaders down to the platoon level, if possible, recon the locations. The leaders select and mark positions, routes, locations for security, overwatch positions, and objectives. They also select locations for prestock and

supplies, obstacles, occupation forces, and the attack on the objective. Movement and other actions are coordinated with other elements of the task force.

Other Tasks

Besides the basic missions, numerous other tasks are specified or implied for the task force to accomplish. Examples could be assisting the passage of covering forces or security forces, or providing a security force. They must also be prepared to detach elements or receive attachments as required. Other requirements may include preparing obstacles, performing surveillance, or conducting intelligence missions.

STEP 2: ANALYZE ENEMY AVENUES OF APPROACH

The battalion must determine all battalion and company-sized avenues of approach. Mounted approaches (those that support movement by armored units in formation) and dismounted avenues of approach are identified.

The characteristics of mounted and dismounted approaches are identified below.

MOUNTED AVENUES OF APPROACH

Few restrictions to movement.

Good overwatch positions.

Cover and concealment.

Facilitate deployment.

DISMOUNTED AVENUES OF APPROACH

Many restrictions to mounted movement.

Short field of fire.

Short range observation.

Considerable cover and concealment.

Identify all routes that enemy armored units may use. Also, identify roads or trails which provide cover and concealment, seen though they do not allow deployment, as secondary avenues of approach. The enemy may use them to infiltrate around or bypass the defenders.

Evaluating Avenues of Approach

Analyze all avenues of approach from the enemy's point of view. The following considerations must be taken into account when determining avenues of approach:

Maneuver Space. How many armored vehicles can deploy and move down the avenue of approach?

Trafficability. How fast can a unit move? Soil trafficability, weather, and ruggedness of terrain are the primary impactors.

Cover and Concealment. Rolling terrain which allows covered movement, or any terrain which allows covered movement without greatly reducing speed, is ideal for armored attacks.

Observation and Fields of Fire. The attacker does not want to be exposed to long-range antiarmor fires. The presence of overwatch positions suitable for tank, antitank guided missile (ATGM), or self-propelled (SP) artillery is desirable.

Key and/or Decisive Terrain. Avenues of approach which allow the attacker to quickly gain control or avoid the effects of key terrain are desirable.

Length of Exposure. Armored forces normally use column formations to move as close to the defender as possible before deploying into assault formations. This minimizes exposure while maintaining control and speed of movement. Avenues of approach which allow rapid, covered movement to such assault positions facilitate these tactics.

Chokepoints and Natural Obstacles. Streams, gullies banked railroads and roads, or any other feature which limits the attacker's ability to deploy or move rapidly.

- Mountainous terrain.
- Slopes over 60 percent angle.
- Escapements (railroad tracks or highways on a steep fill over 1-1/2 meters high).
- Ravines, gullies, streams, or ditches over 5 meters wide.
- Rivers, streams, or canals over 1-1/2 meters deep or with steep banks or soft bottoms.
- Swamps and marshes over 1 meter deep.
- Forests or jungles with trees 8 inches in diameter, or 20 percent slopes with trees as small as 4 inches in diameter. Tree stumps 18 inches high are obstacles.
- Snow over 1 meter deep.
- Railroads.
- Built-up areas.

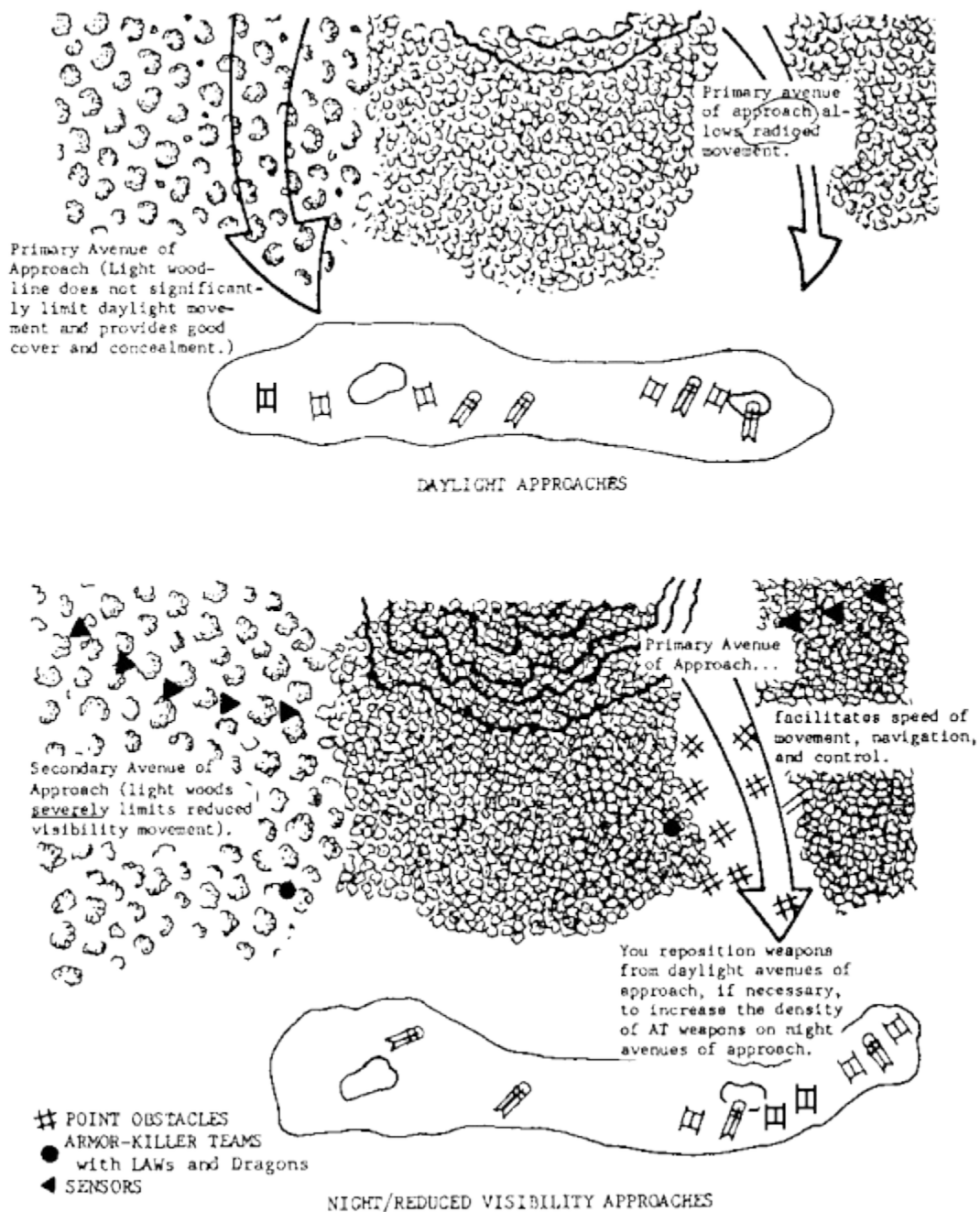
Obstacles such as those listed above lower the value of an avenue of approach to the attacker.

Limited Visibility Effects. Modern battlefields will normally be obscured by the effects of smoke, dust, and fog, as well as darkness. During such periods, road, ridge lines, and other features which facilitate navigation increase the value of an avenue of approach.

[Figure 1](#) shows the variations between avenues of approach during daylight and during night/reduced visibility.

Close Air Support (CAS) and Attack Helicopters. Consider avenues of approach for enemy air formations. Considerations include:

FIGURE 1.
DAYLIGHT AND NIGHT/REDUCED VISIBILITY APPROACHES



ATTACK HELICOPTER

Hill masses/woods to mask approaches.

Permits standoff (2000-5000 m)

Avoids overflight.

CLOSE AIR SUPPORT

Generally broad and wide.

Avoids or minimizes overflight.

Attack helicopter and close air support use roads, mountains, towns, and rivers as navigational aids. Consider these when planning enemy air support avenues of approach.

Vulnerable Areas. From this analysis, identify vulnerable areas along the avenues of approach. These may include:

- Areas where an armored formation's speed and deployment are limited while it is exposed to antiarmor fires.
- Areas where a dismounted formation is exposed while moving along its avenue of approach.
- Areas where the formation must be broken up and exposed to counterattack.

Also identify key and decisive terrain. This is terrain which overwatches the avenues of approach. This terrain, if occupied by the enemy, would allow him to dominate the defender.

STEPS 3/4. SELECT TENTATIVE POSITIONS AND TASKS; ALLOCATE FORCES

Step 3 (Select Tentative Positions and Tasks) and Step 4 (Allocate Forces) are accomplished as the commander makes his tentative plan. This plan is based on the initial analysis of the terrain and continues during the wargaming process and physical reconnaissance. The result is a scheme of maneuver upon which the plan is based.

Using each element in its best role is the key to completing these steps. Task force commanders select positions for elements down to platoon level. To properly select these positioning characteristics of each system.

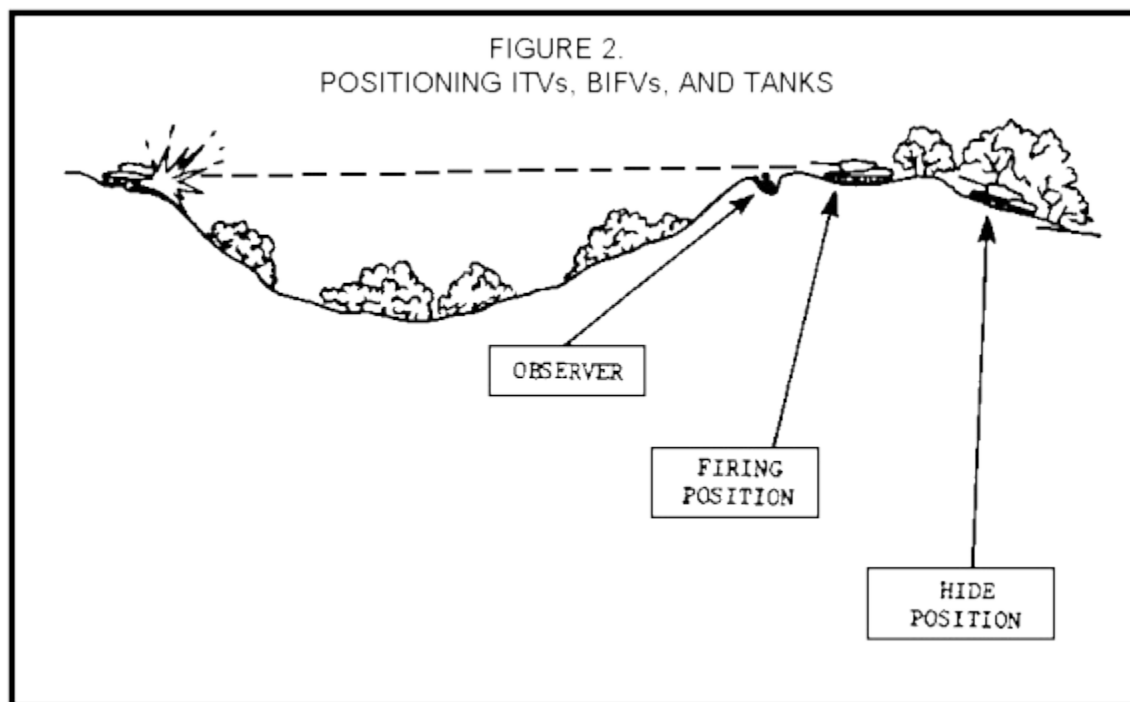
The selected position must provide for an integrated defense. Those selected must provide at least some coverage for all potential approaches in proportion to the danger of the approach. The combination selected must provide mutual support. That is, the selected position should act to generally protect the flanks and rear of the other positions. Also, the position should facilitate the shifting of fires and forces to meet enemy actions during the battle.

Positioning Armor Company/Teams and the Antitank Company

Tanks, improved TOW vehicles (ITVs), cavalry fighting vehicles (CFVS), and the Bradley infantry fighting vehicle (BIFV) are all positioned to fire based on the same considerations. In defensive operations against armored attacks, the defense is organized around these weapon systems. The task force commander organizes and assigns positions to company/team and the antitank company with the following considerations.

Dispersion. Disperse antiarmor units laterally and in depth to reduce the enemy's ability to suppress. This also allows the antiarmor unit to hit the enemy from multiple directions with a heavy volume of continuous fire.

Prevention of Detection and/or Suppression. Place antiarmor units in positions where cover and concealment are available. Avoid obvious terrain and use hide positions when available ([figure 2](#)).



Flanking Fire. Flanking fires are far more effective than frontal fires against a moving attacker. You would normally pick primary positions that will allow flanking fires from defilade or terrain-masked positions. However, you should also consider positioning of antiarmor weapons for long-range engagements.

Security. Employ antiarmor weapons along covered routes where infantry positioning, patrolling, and operations can provide security from enemy attacks.

Maneuver to Concentrate fires. Make provisions to allow the maneuver of units to the avenues of approach being used by the attacker. Use on-order positions and/or sectors of fire and positioning in depth. Covered routes are required.

Transition to Limited Visibility. An attacking enemy will frequently use smoke and suppressive fire to create limited visibility conditions. Positioning must allow rapid transition to a limited visibility defense.

Routes. Covered routes must be available to allow movement in and between positions and for movement against the enemy.

Missions for Tanks, ITVs, BIFVs, and CFVs

Tanks have the greatest battlefield mobility of any task force weapons systems. They have the best capacity to reposition and counterattack by fire. They are the key element in counterattacks by fire and movement. In the counterattack, they have a faster rate of fire and do not have the tracking time consideration of the TOW. Always use tanks to cover the most dangerous avenues of approach and areas where terrain will limit the enemy's time of exposure.

ITVs provide long-range lethal antiarmor fires but are limited by their rate-of-fire and time-of-flight considerations. Position ITVs to maximize their standoff capacity. This is normally in flanking positions or relatively open areas which allow tracking. From alternate and supplemental positions, they may be used as "sniper" weapons for destroying enemy recon or advance guard elements. Firing from these positions prevents disclosure of the defender's primary positions.

BIFVs and CFVs are normally used to provide TOW and 25mm fires. However, you must also consider the need to link up with the dismounted elements. Fighting with the dismounted team on board increases its vulnerability to loss if the BIFV is hit by antiarmor fire. The BIFV is the BMP (Soviet amphibious infantry combat vehicle) killer on the battlefield and should be positioned accordingly. The scheme of maneuver should enhance the standoff, maneuverability, and night fighting advantage of the BIFV over the BMP. Therefore, the normal employment of the BIFV in the defense is with the fighting vehicle element under platoon control.

Positioning Dismounted Elements

Battle positions (BPs) for dismounted infantry are chosen to hold key terrain or to block dismounted or mounted avenues of approach. Dismounted battle positions should be on terrain which prohibits the enemy from using an armored assault across it. The position should be protected from the fires of an armored assault or overwatching vehicles. It should also facilitate the construction and camouflage of fighting positions.

Restricted wooded, urban, or broken terrain is normally chosen. Do not position the dismounted infantry at the forward edge of such terrain; it will not provide sufficient protection from the fire power of armored formations.

When good infantry terrain is not available, use reverse slope positioning as protection against long-range fires. Construction of obstacles, minefields, and strong fighting positions is necessary to allow the infantry to hold this terrain.

As mentioned earlier, BIFVs may be positioned to overwatch the dismounted elements, but are more often assigned separate missions of covering an area. Routes should be available to allow dismounted infantry and the BIFV elements to rejoin.

Missions for Dismounted Elements

In defensive operations, the infantry fights dismounted to allow the commander to maximize the combat power of both the BIFV and dismounted elements. Infantry defensive missions are to:

- Defend designated positions against determined enemy mounted and dismounted attack.

- Provide security by patrolling, establishing operations, antiarmor ambushes, and roadblocks on secondary approaches.
- Emplace obstacles, close lanes or gaps in the obstacles, and to clear fields of fire.
- Destroy enemy armored vehicles in designated engagements areas with DRAGON fire.

Missions for Attack Helicopters

Attack helicopters may occasionally be under the operations control (OPCON) of the battalion. Normally, this will be limited to a specific mission or for a specified time period. The normal mission of helicopters is to destroy enemy armored vehicles with antiarmor fire. Attack helicopters are normally given engagement areas or sectors of fire, and target priorities.

STEP 5. TASK ORGANIZE AND ASSIGN MISSIONS

The task force commander defines his scheme of maneuver by assigning missions to company teams. He task organizes to give each team sufficient assets. He allocates battle positions or sectors with specific tasks to do in each. Before assigning BPs or sectors, he considers possible engagement areas, ways to orient company team fires, key terrain to be defended, and counterattack missions. The task force commander must determine whether or not each subordinate company team will accept decisive engagement. A unit is decisively engaged when it has lost its freedom to maneuver or extricate itself. In the absence of outside assistance, the action must be fought to the conclusion and either won or lost with the forces on hand. The commander must establish clear priorities (occupy, prepare, recon) for the preparation of subsequent missions. He uses execution matrixes to amplify and simplify preparation of instructions.

Allocating Space

The task force allocates space to subordinate company teams using battle positions and sectors. A battle position is a general location enclosed by boundaries. A sector has boundaries only to the flanks and rear. In a sector defense, the company team must tie in with adjacent units at the coordination point. This tie-in may be relinquished only with permission.

Whether assigning battle positions or sectors, the commander ensures that company teams have sufficient room to position weapon systems. They must also have room to disperse and hide elements from enemy direct and indirect fires and observation. As a guideline, 150 meters between ITVs, BFVs, and tanks is desirable in open terrain. Sufficient room for supplementary and alternate positions is also necessary.

In allocating space, the commander considers the type of terrain necessary for protection, dispersion, and maneuver. He must consider reverse slopes, wooded terrain, route, and other such features in making his decision.

Assigning Missions

In assigning missions of holding or preparing to hold terrain, the commander considers the fact that considerable time (4-8 hours) is required.

If there are more critical initial missions for the combat elements available, a company team may be assigned to a reserve position and assigned on-order missions. Company teams can also be ordered to be prepared to attach a platoon to other teams or receive platoons as reinforcements.

Planning for use of combat forces also includes identifying maneuver tasks. Defensive battles by tank and mechanized task forces are fought capitalizing on the maneuver capability of the vehicle.

Maneuver is used to place these elements in position to attack enemy weaknesses. This may be either by using direct fires (counterattack by fire) or actual closing with and destroying him (counterattack by fire and movement). Maneuver is also used to disengage company teams. This allows the repositioning of elements to put them into a better position to defeat the enemy.

The task force commander assigns subordinate teams battle positions as they facilitate coordination of fires and maneuver against the enemy. However, sectors for forward teams are considered enclaved terrain. In close terrain, the ability to mass direct fires and maneuver forces is limited when:

- The primary threat is dismounted infantry.
- Complete coverage of the entire front is required.
- The terrain forms multiple, distinct, small (battalion or company) avenues of approach; assigning company sectors would facilitate allocation of forces to these approaches.

Whichever control measure is used, the mission that the company team is expected to accomplish is specified, and guidance on the commander's intent is given. Subordinates must clearly see how the battle is to be fought and their roles in it. Included would be fire control measures to assign areas to be covered by fire, and requirements for obstacle emplacements and security (if a decisive engagement is to be accepted). The commander must determine the priorities for on-order missions and assign the level of preparation (occupy, prepare, or recon) for each battle position.

Success of the defense involves the rapid maneuver of forces to attack the enemy's flanks and rear. At task force level, this will involve counterattacks, disengagement, and reinforcement. Maneuver also serves to confuse the enemy; an example is occupying positions from which you have no intent of fighting a battle. As the enemy approaches, the team disengages and moves to a new position. This presents a new defense and a problem to the attacker.

Maneuvering Forces Against Enemy Armor

Maneuvering forces against an attacking enemy armored formation requires preparation. Normally, the attacker has the advantage of picking the location and the timing of the attack. This gives him the momentum and the element of surprise. The task force commander must plan, coordinate, and prepare for the maneuver to the extent that time allows. Even a few minutes saved by such actions can be a major factor in winning or losing a fast-moving battle. The commander must:

Determine Areas of Weaknesses. Consider what the enemy's problems will be as he tries to advance. In order to maintain momentum, an attacker is forced to accept weaknesses such as gaps in mutual support, open flanks, or lack of deployment. Any or all of these situations can create opportunities for the defenders.

Position Forces in Depth. Forces initially uncommitted are easier and faster to maneuver than forward forces which might be initially engaged by fixing or supporting attacks. Disengagement of forces, even from light contact, is a difficult operation for the company team.

See the Battlefield. Effective maneuver against weaknesses is only possible if the task force commander knows where the enemy is, what he is doing, and his weaknesses. Especially important is "seeing" into the enemy's formation. This is accomplished through use of stay-behind observation posts (OPs), nonorganic ground surveillance radar (GSR), and remotely emplaced sensor teams (REMs). Security must also be established enroute to allow movement without the threat of enemy contact.

Specify Preparation Priorities. Adequacy of preparation is limited by time and the difficulty of the mission assigned. As mentioned before, there are three general levels of preparation: occupy, prepare, and recon.

Define the Intent. Define the intent so that independent maneuvers can be initiated in the event of a communications disruption. The commander must define limits on independent maneuver by subordinate commanders.

Assign Routes and Priorities. Covered and concealed routes, offset from primary enemy avenues of approach, are best for maneuver against flanks of enemy formations. These routes can also be used to disengage and move away from the attacker. Identify and assign routes for each element. If several units have to use the same route, assign priorities for movement.

Counterattack by Fire or Maneuver. Consider whether to counterattack by fire or by maneuver. Counterattack by fire is the norm used at task force level. Consider counterattacks by fire and movement when:

- The enemy is mainly dismounted infantry in the open.
- The terrain does not provide fields of fire for counterattack by fire.
- The enemy formation has been broken up and appears confused.
- The enemy has captured decisive terrain.
- The enemy has been defeated and counterattack by fire and movement would mop up the remnants.

Use Decision Points Developed During IPB. Use decision points developed during intelligence preparation of the battlefield (IPB) with contingency planning. Decision points identify those battlefield events which may require battlefield decisions.

Example: "Team B disengage and move to BP 42 if 10 or more enemy vehicles cross route 27," or "Team C be prepared to send a tank platoon to BP19 to cover TRP 4127 if main enemy efforts appear to be developing against Team D."

Decision points expedite quick maneuver and give subordinates a clearer idea of the commander's concept. This in turn facilitates maneuver in the event of a communications disruption.

STEP 6: INTEGRATE COMBAT SUPPORT

Combat support provides a valuable contribution to the defense. However, availability of support fires will often be limited, due to the heavy demands placed on them by other friendly and enemy missions. It is critical that you use combat support elements only for important tasks that they are capable of accomplishing. Full planning and prioritization are critical.

Fire Support

Destruction of enemy armored vehicles is the most important overall priority to the task force. However, supporting fires have a limited capability to actually destroy enemy armored vehicles (Copperhead and close air support with antiarmor loads are exceptions). Normally, you would select tasks for supporting fires that complement direct fire antiarmor weapons rather than massing both together. Because of the normal obscuration of the battlefield, using supporting fires in the same area as direct fires is not advisable. It will normally degrade the effectiveness of tank and antitank guided missile (ATGM) fires.

Tasks for Supporting Fires. Plan and use supporting fires:

- At long-range to disrupt, slow, and disorganize the enemy.
- On likely enemy overwatch positions to suppress antiarmor and artillery used in a direct fire role.
- To provide illumination.
- To cover disengagement, movements, and counterattacks.
- Along covered avenues of approach to destroy enemy dismounted infantry. Mortars and field artillery are particularly effective against dismounted infantry. Final protective fires (FPFs) are used to block assaulting infantry and are planned close-in to battle positions.
- To defeat dismounted breaching attempts.
- To provide smoke for suppression and obscuration.
- With FASCAM (family of scatterable mines) planned on avenues of approach where movement is choked, and to close lanes, gaps, or enemy breaches in obstacles. FASCAM is normally fired just in front of enemy deployed formations. Just like any other obstacle, it is most effective when tied in with other obstacles to canalize and slow the enemy.
- In a series of positions from which to deliver direct fires.
- With engagement areas and air space coordination areas (ACAs) for CAS planned and coordinated with the brigade. They should be designated in open areas which facilitate protected air routes and minimize the need to restrict other fires.
- Along avenues of approach to slow down the enemy in areas or times where/when direct fires are not effective until repositioning can be effected.
- To suppress enemy forward ADA when CAS or attack helicopters are supporting.

Developing Fire Priorities. The task force commander develops a priority listing of the above tasks based on the greatest needs to support the scheme of maneuver. He develops the listing with the fire support officer (FSO), who then coordinates with the air liaison officer (ALO) and heavy mortar platoon leader. After development of the initial fire plan, it is refined based on input from company commanders and fire support teams (FISTs). This priority of tasks is the primary way the commander describes his intent and ensures unity of effort. The FSO/FIST executes fires based on the commander's intent.

Normally, the task force is allocated priority targets which are planned on the most dangerous enemy locations. These priority targets are shifted as the battle develops. The task force commander also gives a priority of fires to a unit. Priority of fires is normally given to the forward security force initially, then to the team most in need of fire support as the battle develops.

Assign dedicated ADA weapons to provide priorities of protection in accordance with the vulnerability and criticality of the elements of the task force. Until battle positions are prepared, elements preparing positions and obstacles have priority. Once battle positions are hardened, command post (CP) and trains elements will usually receive priority. During maneuver, moving units receive priority due to their vulnerability. Position task force ADA elements well forward, but under centralized task force control. During movements forward, MANPADS (man portable air defense systems) move with company teams. Passive measures, such as camouflage, use of hide positions, and OPSEC, are important to avoid enemy identification.

Engineer Support

The engineer platoon working with the task force is normally the executor of this function of the task force. However, the task force is responsible for emplacement of obstacles. The task force provides manpower, additional equipment, and supplies to support the engineer effort.

Engineer equipment can also be used to build survivability positions. Priority is normally given to this task when the terrain does not provide sufficient hull defilade firing positions. When guiding survivability positions, care must be taken to build the positions down. Parapets do not provide protection against modern armor piercing, fin stabilized, discarding sabot (APFSDS)-type rounds. Priority of survivability positions is to tanks, BIFVs, ADA and ITVs. Fortify prestocked class V sites, combat trains, and CP locations as time permits. If covered routes out of and in to battle positions (or for resupply) are not available, these may receive a priority.

Use of Obstacles. Some important considerations in the use of obstacles are listed below:

- Manpower and special equipment available.
- Defending forces use obstacles to push the enemy into areas where he is most vulnerable to direct fires and to hold him in these areas.
- Cover obstacles with direct and indirect fires as well as by observation. Do not plan obstacles (except as noted below) in locations where they cannot be protected during all periods of visibility. Assign specific company team the responsibility for protecting each obstacle.

- Place point obstacles at irregular patterns along secondary restricted approaches to slow rapid movement. These might not always be covered by direct fire.
- Time to emplace elaborate obstacle systems is often limited. Place obstacles where maximum use can be made of existing natural or manmade features. Constricted portions of avenues of approach are good locations for maximum return of obstacle work time.
- Obstacles should decrease enemy mobility without hindering friendly force movement.
- Lanes and gaps through obstacles may be required to allow movement. If so, devise a plan describing who closes, the signal, and when and where to report the closure. Company team commanders usually control gaps and lanes in their areas.
- Employ obstacles in depth. Obstacles close to or in the battle position are easier to protect than obstacles placed forward of battle positions. Obstacles placed too close together will require only a single enemy response. They must be far enough apart so that each one will require a new deployment of the enemy's counter-obstacle force/equipment.
- Normally, the most effective and least time-consuming type of artificial obstacle to emplace is a hasty minefield. Mines can lower the enemy's will to fight through fear of sudden and unexpected casualties.
- Use hasty protective minefields for short periods of time or for specific operational missions. They can be laid by company teams and assisted by engineers, if available. Place each mine to take advantage of likely armor avenues of approach or expected future enemy positions. No standard pattern or density is required. Mines must be readily detectable and removable by the installing unit.
- Record and report all hasty minefields, whether emplaced by the task force or emplaced at task force request, in accordance with SOP. A critical consideration for hasty minefields is the availability of mines. Basic loads should include a quantity of mines as designated by the commander.
- To be effective, obstacles must have a surprise effect. Security forces must be forward to avoid enemy observation of obstacle construction. Obstacles should be in defilade and camouflaged if possible. Protect obstacles from enemy reconnaissance efforts by assigning patrols, OPs, and ambushes. Use smoke to conceal obstacles in depth.
- Dummy obstacles are used to confuse the enemy.
- The exact position of obstacles is coordinated between the engineer and company team covering and/or protecting the obstacle. The enemy will often try to breach obstacles during darkness or periods of reduced visibility. Obstacles placed where they cannot be protected are wasted efforts.
- Check obstacles at first light to ensure breaching has not occurred.

Surveillance and Intelligence

It is important to determine and follow the attacker's maneuver. Knowing the axis and formations he is using, the location of his flanks, size of his elements, and their movement rates is vital to a successful defense. Equally important is to keep the enemy from "seeing" the battlefield. If the enemy can determine the defensive scheme of the task force, he can target preparatory fires. This may degrade or destroy the task force's combat capability; the enemy will be able to identify weak points and attack them. Successful execution of both tasks is critical. It involves use of the IPB (intelligence preparation of the battlefield) process and effective surveillance and/or countersurveillance measures.

Scouts. These are the soldiers best trained to function as the eyes and ears of the task force. Use scouts in the areas hardest to cover. They are the primary means by which the commander "sees" the battlefield. Their function is one of combat support rather than maneuver.

Ground Surveillance Radar (GSR). GSR is a CEWI (combat electronics warfare intelligence) asset that is often attached to the task force. It can detect moving vehicles and personnel in open terrain at long ranges. GSR can provide information on the number, location, disposition, and types of targets. Normally, place GSRs to cover open, high speed approaches where early detection is critical. You may also use them to monitor defiles and to detect enemy recon elements by oblique shots across the sector's open flat areas. Also, use GSRs to vector patrols and assist during withdrawals.

Improve the effectiveness of GSRs by using overlapping sectors and the "flicker" on-off technique, and by providing local security to GSR positions. A rest plan is required to ensure that GSR operators are fresh and alert.

Reconnoiter GSR positions during daylight conditions and occupy them just prior to darkness. Targets can be generally identified at 10 kilometers or less, but movements can be detected at much greater ranges. Therefore, use GSR in good visibility to support the long-range. GSRs can often support the security mission without actually being placed on the screen line. GSR NCOs are technical experts. Commanders should include them in the planning process.

Remotely Emplaced Sensors (REMs). Use REM teams, from the CEWI battalion, when available. They are division assets placed or attached in direct support as required. The receiving or supported unit provides the manpower to emplace the REMS. The team leader monitors the REMs output for the S2. Emplace REMs as far forward as possible. They are especially useful in covering dead space and broken terrain where observation would require more OPs or patrols than can be provided. They can also assist in detecting attempts to breach friendly obstacles and in keeping track of enemy movements after withdrawal of the security force.

STEP 7: FINISH THE PLAN

With the concept of the operation complete, the commander and his staff now determine the additional taskings and coordination needed to make the concept work. They take the required corrective actions to compensate for any disadvantages associated with the chosen course of action. They finalize plans for fire control, combat service support, surveillance, obstacle emplacement, communications, and other coordination measures. They determine requirements for additional support and request the support from higher headquarters. Coordination is made with adjacent, supporting, and higher

headquarters. They issue an order consisting of at least an overlay with graphics, execution matrix, and necessary coordinating instructions. Planning and preparations continue as long as the task force remains in position.

Security

The task force ensures that its security plan is complete by reviewing its surveillance and countersurveillance procedures. It is critical that the task force "see" the enemy early and preclude him from discovering friendly defense organization. The enemy's ability to bring overwhelming force to bear on friendly defenses is directly tied to the effectiveness of his reconnaissance.

As the plan is finalized, the commander carefully refines the surveillance and countersurveillance requirements for the battle. If necessary, he allocates additional forces to strengthen the security force to meet intelligence requirements.

Defensive Fire Control

The task force commander uses fire control measures to mass the fires of his command on the enemy formation. This is accomplished while distributing fires to avoid target overkill. He places engagement areas and target reference points (TRPs) along each avenue of approach and assigns engagement priorities. Ideally, each battalion-sized avenue of approach should be initially covered by a company. The commander establishes on-order positions to allow more units to fire on that approach. The use of engagement areas has proven to be an effective fire control measure at task force level.

It is also imperative that the commander provide guidance on timing for various weapon systems to initiate fires. Early engagements are usually used in delay operations and to deceive the enemy. When defending, it is more likely that the bulk of the task force will wait until it masses its fires.

Planning Limited Visibility Adjustments

There are two general categories or conditions which limit visibility: those which mechanical aids can overcome or partially overcome, and those which mechanical aids cannot overcome.

The first category obviously includes darkness. The second category includes battlefield dust, smoke, rain, snow, fog, or other conditions that cannot be overcome by illumination, image intensification, or radar. Task forces must always plan for daylight and limited visibility operations simultaneously. The enemy may not attack during the daylight, or a daylight battle may continue into the night. Either way, the task force may not be able to adjust from its original positions and adapt to limited visibility operations.

Technology has radically changed the limited-visibility battlefield. Night vision devices have greatly increased limited visibility capabilities to see, engage, and move. Electronic means (radar and sensors) have also expanded limited operations capabilities. The major defensive tactical impacts are:

- The advantages of the stationary defender over the moving attacker have grown. The most advanced technology has gone into the gunner's sight.

- Despite the increase in capability, effective ranges will be reduced by limited visibility conditions. The extent of reduction is dependent on the nature of the limited visibility and the mechanical equipment available.
- The amount of limited visibility equipment is limited, and fields of fire are reduced. Most of the soldiers in a unit will be significantly impaired during periods of limited visibility. The psychological impacts, need for tighter formations, and special navigation and command and control techniques remain.

The attacker can be expected to take advantage of limited visibility conditions or create them in a manner that benefits him. Normally, the commander can expect the attacker to use night limited visibility conditions to:

- Conduct reconnaissance operations to locate the defender's weapons, obstacles, and positions.
- Breach obstacles.
- Move elements through gaps in the defender's coverage caused by reduced weapon ranges.

This means that defending during periods of limited visibility will be a normal rather than a special condition. The ability of the attacker to create conditions of smoke, dust, or other obscurants means that the defender must be able to rapidly modify the defense. In fact, defense planning should assume limited visibility rather than full visibility.

Adjustments for Limited Visibility. The following steps help to overcome the problems of limited visibility:

- Use long-range detection equipment on well defined avenues of approach.
- Redeploy some units and weapons to concentrate along avenues of approach that the enemy will be likely to use during limited visibility.
- Use increased numbers of infantry, scouts, OPs, patrols, and armor-killer teams forward on secondary avenues of approach and between positions.
- Use point obstacles and early warning devices along likely night approaches to slow the enemy or alert defenders to enemy presence.
- Plan and rehearse the required movement of weapons and units and the massing of fires on the approaches the enemy may use. Friendly units moving along reconnoitered routes should be able to move faster than an enemy moving through unfamiliar terrain.
- Plan illumination on or behind likely engagement areas to silhouette enemy forces. While this illumination should not be needed with thermal sights, it will be needed with other sights.
- Adjustments to the defensive organization should commence before dark. Return to daylight positions should be completed before dawn.
- When heavy rain, snowstorms, fog, or any other conditions prevent use of mechanical aids, many of the techniques for night defense apply. Defenders must move closer to the avenues of

approach that they are guarding. Sensors may still be of value, and radar can sometimes penetrate these conditions.

- Make greater use of infantry, and even tanks and ITVs, to protect obstacles against breaching.
- Make even greater use of flanking engagements and obstacles. The attacker's vulnerability to them is greater during periods of reduced visibility.

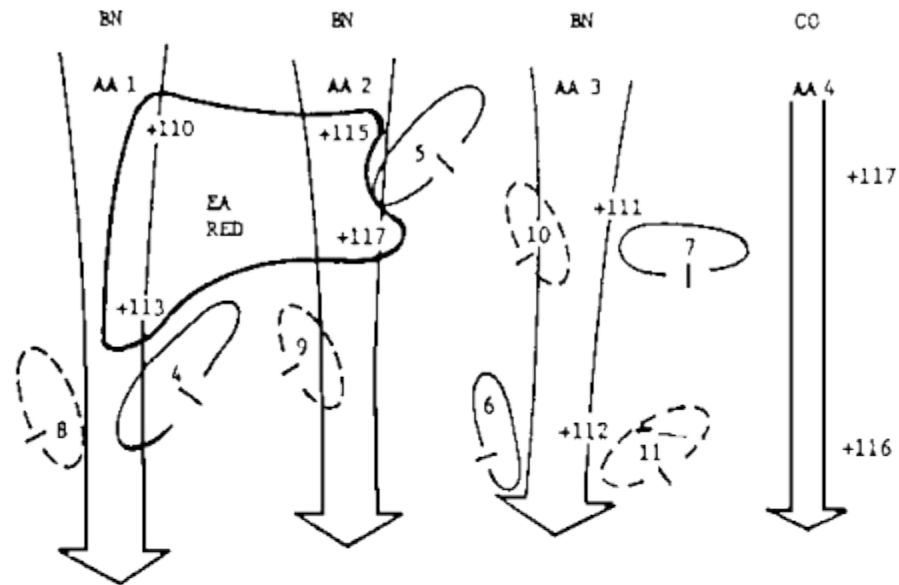
Issuing Orders

The issuance of the OPOD in oral or written form and the subsequent supervision culminate the planning process. It is a major step that ensures unity of effort and clearly conveys the commander's intent. When possible and practical, issue the defense order from a forward vantage point overlooking the area of operations. Company/team commanders, having left the movement of their units to their 2ICs, can, upon receipt, immediately move to their own defensive areas. There they should begin their reconnaissance and save time for their subordinate leaders.

Use execution matrixes to assign initial and on-order missions, positions, and fire control guidance to units. An execution matrix with an overlay is the minimum that the commander should attempt to provide to his subordinates.

The matrix ([figure 3](#)) is simple to construct. Place the battalion task force elements across the top of the box and position "levels of preparation" on the side. Include special missions for the task force elements. The boxes are then divided into two sections. Battle positions are recorded in the top of the block and fire control orientation graphics are recorded in the lower section. Use graphics to show TRPs or EAs (engagement areas).

FIGURE 3. EXECUTION MATRIX



	Tm A	Tm B	Tm C	Tm D
OCCUPY	4 110 113 Left side EA RED	5 117 115 Right side EA RED	6 111 112	7 117 111
PREPARE				11 112 116
RECON	10 111		8 113	9 115 117
RECON	11	11	9 115	
MISSIONS	Be prepared to move to 11 to cover Tm D disengagement.	Be prepared to move to 11 to cover Tm D disengagement or reinforce Tm D with one tank plt.		Move to 11 before decisively engaged.

You should now be familiar with the seven steps of planning a defense. These steps, with minor modifications, are applicable to the planning of retrograde operations.

RETROGRADE OPERATIONS

A retrograde is any organized movement away from the enemy. There are three types of retrograde operations. They are:

- Delays.
- Withdrawals.
- Retirements.

A retrograde may be forced by enemy action or executed voluntarily. A well-planned, well-organized, aggressively executed retrograde operation may provide opportunities for inflicting heavy damage on enemy troops and equipment.

PURPOSES OF RETROGRADE OPERATIONS

The purpose of retrograde operations is to economize forces, maintain freedom of maneuver, or avoid decisive combat. A battalion task force conducts a retrograde as part of a larger force (brigade, division) to:

- Avoid combat under unfavorable conditions.
- Gain time.
- Reposition forces.
- Permit the use of a force elsewhere.
- Harass, exhaust, resist, and delay the enemy.
- Draw the enemy into an unfavorable position.
- Shorten lines of communications and supply.
- Clear zones for friendly use of chemical or nuclear weapons.
- Conform to the movement of other friendly forces.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR A RETROGRADE

Consider the following factors before conducting a retrograde operation:

- Leadership and morale.
- Surveillance and reconnaissance.
- Mobility.
- Deception.
- Conservation of combat power.

- Commander's intention.

The following paragraphs will describe each consideration separately.

Leadership and Morale

Maintenance of the offensive spirit is essential among subordinate leaders and troops. Movements to the rear may be seen as a defeat or a threat of isolation. To prevent this, commanders must ensure that soldiers have confidence in their leaders and know the purpose of the retrograde and their role in it.

Surveillance and Reconnaissance

Reports must be timely and accurate. Knowledge of the enemy's action is especially vital during retrograde operations. Often the only accurate information is from the commander near the scene of the action.

The intelligence requirement for the commander increases as forces are echeloned to the rear and combat capabilities are reduced. Surveillance and reconnaissance must locate and report enemy attempts to pursue, outflank, or isolate all or a portion of the task force.

Mobility

Commanders must achieve a mobility advantage for the retrograding task force over the enemy. The larger the mobility differential, the greater will be the probability of a successful retrograde. Therefore, all possible steps to enhance friendly mobility and to degrade the mobility of the enemy must be taken.

Improving Friendly Mobility. Friendly mobility is improved by:

- Reconnaissance of the routes and battle positions.
- Improving existing road networks and controlling traffic flow.
- Executing well-rehearsed unit movement SOPs.
- Positioning air defense and security forces at critical chokepoints.
- Evacuating civilian refugees or restricting their movements to routes not used by the task force.
- Evacuating casualties, recoverable supplies, and unnecessary materiel.
- Displacing nonessential combat service support activities.

Degrading Enemy Mobility. The mobility of the enemy can be degraded by:

- Occupying and controlling chokepoints or terrain that dominate high-speed avenues of approach.
- Destroying roads, bridges, and rafting on the avenues not required for friendly forces.
- Improving natural obstacles with artificial obstacles and covering them with fire.
- Employing indirect fire and smoke to degrade the enemy's vision and to slow his rate of advance.
- Conducting spoiling attacks to keep the enemy off balance and to force him to react.

Deception

Deception operations during retrograde operations provide security to cover moving units and to provide surprise from resulting unit dispositions. Proper use of deception measures causes indecision and delay in enemy actions.

Deception is aided by taking maximum advantage of darkness and limited-visibility conditions. Using infiltration techniques is also an effective method to cover the relocation and evacuation of units and materiel.

Commanders can improve security during retrograde operations by:

- Employing notional or dummy minefields.
- Establishing decoy positions.
- Maintaining normal radio traffic patterns and artillery fires.
- Imposing radio listening silence.
- Disengaging units.
- Using feints and demonstrations to indicate other than the actual activities.
- Employing deceptive electronic warfare and psychological operation measures.

Conserving Combat Power

In conducting a retrograde operation, the commander takes action to conserve his combat power.

Considerations that the commander weighs are:

- To balance the risk of conserving the combat power of the task force and mission accomplishment.
- To disengage and withdraw less mobile units and nonessential elements prior to withdrawing the main body.
- To use mobile forces to cover the withdrawal of less mobile forces.
- To use the minimum essential forces to cover the withdrawal of the main body.

Commander's Specific Intentions

As in the offense and defense, each type of retrograde operation is designed to satisfy a commander's specific intention:

COMMANDER'S INTENT	OPERATION SELECTED
Trade space for time, inflict maximum damage on the enemy, and avoid decisive engagement to preserve the force.	DELAY
Break contact (free a unit for a new mission).	WITHDRAWAL
Move a force not in contact to the rear.	RETIREMENT

Each of the above types of retrograde operations will be discussed in detail in lesson 2.

This concludes the first learning event. You should now be familiar with the planning procedures for defensive operations, and the purposes and considerations for conducting retrograde operations. The next learning event will teach you the Soviet doctrine for countering retrograde operations.

Learning Event 2:

IDENTIFY THE NATURE OF THE SOVIET THREAT TO U.S. FORCES CONDUCTING RETROGRADE OPERATIONS

The Soviet Dictionary of Basic Military Terms defines "pursuit" as:

An attack on a withdrawing enemy, undertaken in the course of an operation or battle for the purpose of finally destroying or capturing his forces. Destruction of a withdrawing enemy is achieved by hitting his main body with (fire) strikes, by relentless and energetic parallel or frontal pursuit, by straddling his withdrawal route, and by attacking his flanks and rear.

This learning event will familiarize you with the tactics used by the Soviet Army in pursuing a retrograding force. The data will be presented as if it were being written for use by a Soviet officer. It will assist you in "seeing" the battlefield through the eyes of a Soviet commander during a pursuit operation.

PURSUIT

Pursuit features swift and deep movements of forces to strike the enemy's most vulnerable areas. Three basic requirements for successful pursuit are planning and organization, detection of withdrawal, and a maintenance of high tempo. By definition, a pursuit occurs when the enemy withdraws. An enemy could be forced to withdraw:

- As a result of a meeting engagement.
- After a penetration of his defensive position.
- Following a nuclear strike.

An enemy may deliberately withdraw:

- When threatened with encirclement.
- If he is making a redistribution of forces.
- When he attempts to draw the opposing side into a kill zone.
- When he withdraws for safety before launching a nuclear strike.

Normally, a regimental commander is the lowest commander to order initiation of pursuit. However, all commanders are expected to move independently into pursuit when indicators of withdrawal are seen.

The scale of a pursuit is governed by the size of the force involved. It is categorized as:

- Tactical pursuit. Tactical pursuit is conducted by a regiment or a division. In the case of a regiment, pursuit would probably extend about 10 to 20 km into enemy depths; in the case of a division, from 20 to 30 km.
- Operational pursuit. Operational pursuit is conducted by army or higher headquarters on a broad front. It may extend to a depth of several hundred kilometers.

Tentative planning for pursuit is included in the initial attack plan. The amount of detail in such planning depends on the anticipated actions of the enemy. It also depends on the battle formation of the attacking troops and the amount of planning time available.

Planning Considerations for Pursuit

Items that must be considered when planning the pursuit are:

- Possible enemy routes of withdrawal.
- The scheme of maneuver.
- Availability and condition of pursuit routes.
- Forces available.
- Critical terrain features (high ground, road junctions, river crossings, bridges, defiles).
- The use of forward detachments and helicopter assault forces.
- Allocation of nuclear weapons and delivery systems.
- Combat support and combat service support resources.

Active reconnaissance, appreciation of enemy tactics, and knowledge of the current tactical situation are essential in obtaining indicators of enemy withdrawal. Signs of preparation for withdrawal include:

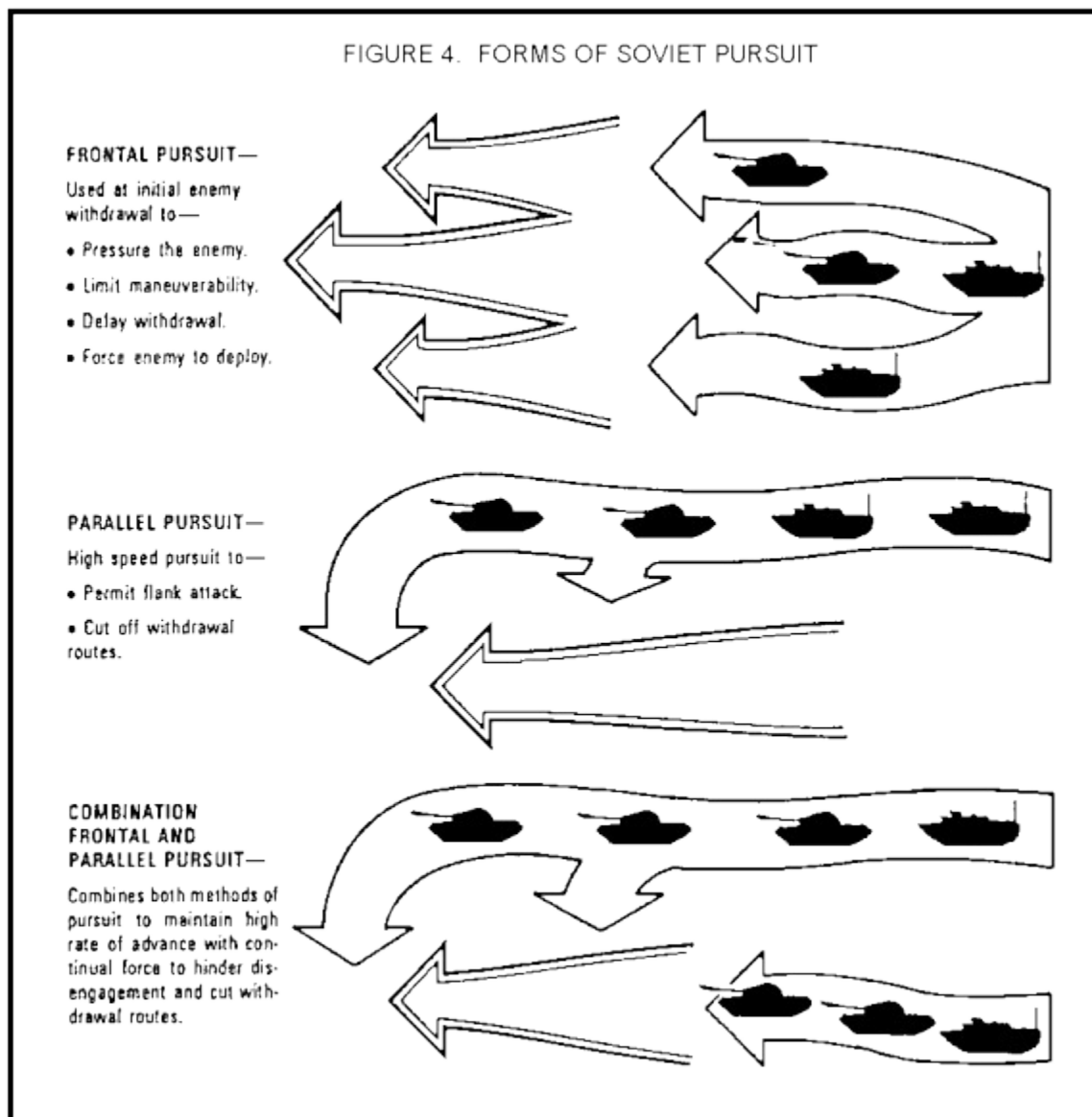
- Nuclear strikes against first echelon attacking formations.
- Intensified movement to the rear, especially artillery and reserves.
- Increase in fires in individual sectors of the front.

- Conduct of heavy fire concentrations in separate areas which apparently are not in accord with the developing situation. Also, heavy fires at a time when there appears to be a general reduction in fires.
- Intensified reconnaissance.
- Preparations for demolitions and/or destruction of facilities, installations, and equipment.
- Limited local counterattacks.

Once pursuit has been initiated, its success depends on the maintenance of a high rate of advance with continuous application of force.

Forms of Pursuit

The forms of pursuit are frontal, parallel, and combination frontal and parallel ([figure 4](#), below). The preferred and most effective form is combination frontal and parallel.



Frontal Pursuit. The frontal pursuit is conducted by forces in contact. It is the most likely type of pursuit at the very beginning of the enemy withdrawal, at night, in difficult terrain, when overcoming obstacles, or when off-road maneuver is limited.

Frontal pursuit applies constant pressure on the enemy. It limits his freedom of maneuver, his ability to take up defensive positions, and his ability to disengage. The aim of a frontal pursuit is to force the enemy to deploy and to accept combat under unfavorable conditions, and to delay the withdrawal. Maneuver and flank attacks, though limited, are conducted. The frontal pursuit normally is not decisive since it only pushes the enemy back on his approaching reserves.

Parallel Pursuit. In the parallel pursuit, the pursuit force advances on routes parallel to the withdrawing enemy. High-speed parallel pursuit may permit either the attack on the enemy's flank or cutting his main withdrawal routes. Under threat of flank attack, the enemy may be required to split his force and delay withdrawal while defending against the pursuer's attack. Unless accompanied by frontal pursuit, this method gives the enemy some opportunity to maneuver and counterattack.

Combination Frontal and Parallel Pursuit. In the combination frontal and parallel pursuit, the main pursuit force moves parallel to the withdrawing enemy. A smaller force pursues directly, maintaining constant contact with the enemy. The combination form has the advantages of both frontal and parallel pursuit. It hinders disengagement, leads to flank attacks, and cuts the enemy's withdrawal routes.

Command and Control

Centralized planning and decentralized execution characterize the pursuit. Preservation of control is a primary concern in a fast-moving situation. At the same time, attempts should be made to disrupt the enemy's command and control. Continuity of control is achieved by:

- Designating the direction of advance, routes, or zones of advance, phase lines, and objectives.
- Fixing times for completion of specific missions.
- Altering missions as subsequent developments require.
- Augmenting normal radio communications with aerial relays.
- Using two command groups. The commander will be at an observation post behind the leading combat elements. The second group, headed by the chief of staff, will be the main force.
- Designating the phase lines from which the artillery must be prepared to fire by specified times.

Conducting the Pursuit

A timely and correct decision to initiate pursuit is critical to its success. If the enemy is able to begin an undetected withdrawal, he avoids the constant pressure that disrupts his actions. Further, if the enemy can gain a safe distance of withdrawal, the attacking forces are vulnerable to tactical nuclear strikes.

The enemy will attempt to withdraw at an advantageous time, usually at night. Timely actions are taken to ensure maintenance of contact. Artillery fire and air strikes harass and disrupt the enemy's withdrawal. In the initial phase, tank and motorized rifle pursuit groups attempt to make up routes

parallel to the enemy withdrawal route. This helps establish the combination frontal and parallel method of pursuit.

Initiate Frontal Pursuit. Units in contact initiate frontal pursuit immediately on detection of withdrawal, moving in whatever formation they have at the moment. As the situation permits, they reform into march or prebattle formation, and then into attack formation when required.

Initiate Parallel Pursuit. The actions of the frontal pursuit force are aimed at facilitating the commitment of a parallel pursuit force, which is preferably tank heavy. The parallel force, with security elements in the lead, also uses march or prebattle formations until deployment for the attack is required.

In pursuit, the commander attempts to employ the maximum available combat troops. Pursuit is conducted in a wide zone. This can be up to 30 kilometers for a division. The commander retains the tactical options to converge on the most important axis or to redirect the effort on a new axis. This flexibility is also required when engaging advancing enemy reserves or counterattacking forces.

Before or during the course of the pursuit, forward detachments may be designated to move ahead of main pursuit forces. They will then operate independently to outdistance the withdrawing enemy forces. These detachments avoid combat until they reach their assigned objective area. Their missions may include concurrent reconnaissance reporting or seizure of critical points on withdrawal routes. They may also include the destruction of the enemy's means of nuclear attack, and linkup with tactical airborne or heliborne landings.

Reconnaissance. As the pursuit is developed, reconnaissance elements provide information on the disposition of retreating enemy formations and on the forward movement of his reserves. Because of the potential depth of the operation, aerial reconnaissance may be the primary means of identifying significant threats to pursuit force. This intelligence is vital at the stage when a pursuit force faces the risk of becoming over-extended. It could be the basis for termination of the pursuit.

Heliborne and Airborne. Heliborne or airborne forces may be assigned missions similar to those described for forward detachments. Vertical envelopment permits operations much deeper into enemy territory.

Artillery. When pursuit is initiated, the parallel pursuit force normally is formed from uncommitted second echelon elements. The control of artillery is decentralized to maneuver battalions. Batteries and even individual guns move with lead elements to deliver direct fire. Artillery elements are a normal component of forward detachments.

During pursuit, artillery missions include fire on columns and concentration at road junctions, defiles, bridges, and crossings. They also include repulse of enemy counter-attacks, destruction or delay of enemy reserves, and destruction of enemy means of nuclear attack.

Air Support. Air support complements other fire support in the destruction and disorganization of the retreating enemy, particularly of mobile targets. The situation during the course of a pursuit may become obscure. Consequently, air reconnaissance is an important factor in ensuring the success of the pursuit.

Air reconnaissance is used to determine:

- The beginning of the withdrawal of rear area forces.
- The composition of withdrawing forces and direction of movement.
- The composition and direction of movement of the reserve force moving forward.
- The nature of obstacles and intermediate defensive positions.

Engineers. Movement support detachments and mobile obstacle detachments provided by engineer troops are instrumental in sustaining the rate of advance. In the initial phase, their missions include operating from forward positions to breach obstacles and minefields. In the course of the pursuit, their mission is to provide bridge and road repairs and to block withdrawal routes with mines, demolitions, and obstacles.

Logistics. With maximum commitment of forces, requirements for fuel, ammunition, and maintenance increase, priority of logistics is given to units having the greatest success. The depth of pursuit is governed by the capability for logistic support. One yardstick for sustaining pursuit is the requirement that, in a large scale offensive, a tank division with reinforcing transportation units should be self-sufficient for up to five days.

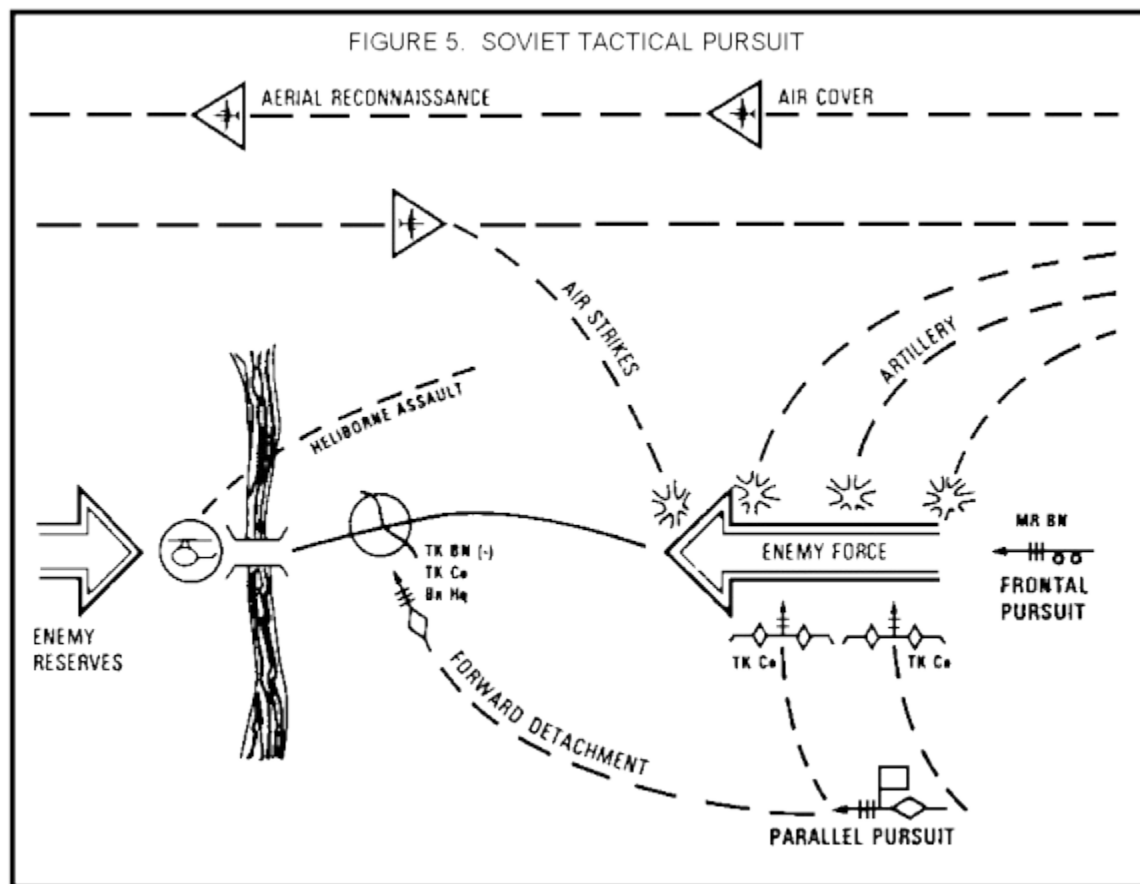
Nuclear Targets. The actions of the pursuing force, in conjunction with forward detachments and air-landed forces, act to create nuclear targets. Priority nuclear targets include:

- Approaching reserves.
- Main groupings of retreating forces.
- Enemy concentrations at critical areas (bridges, road junctions, defiles).
- Enemy means of nuclear attack.

Termination of the Pursuit. The pursuit is terminated on order of the next higher commander. Conditions under which pursuit is terminated include the following:

- The enemy has been destroyed.
- The pursuing force has outdistanced its logistic support.
- The pursuing force has become overextended and is in danger of being cut off.
- The advantage no longer belongs to the pursuing force.

A diagram of a Soviet attack on a withdrawing enemy is shown in [figure 5](#), below.



This concludes the first lesson. You should now be able to identify the purposes of, and planning considerations for, retrograde operations and the nature of the Soviet threat to U.S. forces conducting retrograde operations.

If you have any questions, go back and reread the text. When you are ready, take the practice exercise for this lesson.

PRACTICE EXERCISE 1

INSTRUCTIONS

The following items will test your knowledge of the material covered in this lesson. There is only one correct answer for each item. **When you have completed the exercise, print this page and check your answers with the answer key that follows.** If you answer any question incorrectly, study again that part of the lesson which contains the portion involved.

SITUATION: You are the commander of a battalion task force. Your TF is preparing a defensive position against a larger Soviet force. As part of the defense, you include a plan for a retrograde operation.

1. You are preparing the plan for the defense. Insuring METT-T to develop the plan, you first
 - ☐ A. calculate the manpower needed.
 - ☐ B. consider the mission.
 - ☐ C. determine the maneuver.
 - ☐ D. plan for needed munitions.
2. You are developing the execution matrix. In the matrix, you must enter the levels of preparation for the defensive mission. The three levels of preparation that enter are
 - ☐ A. occupy, prepare, and recon.
 - ☐ B. primary, intermediate, and advanced.
 - ☐ C. construct, occupy, and defend.
 - ☐ D. plan, select, and develop.
3. In preparing the plan, you are analyzing possible enemy avenues of approach. One possible approach route has short fields of fire, short-range observation, and considerable cover and concealment. You would classify this route as a
 - ☐ A. mounted avenue of approach.
 - ☐ B. dismounted avenue of approach.
 - ☐ C. mounted and dismounted avenue of approach.

4. In the plan, you are positioning your antiarmor units. You attempt to pick primary positions that will allow

- ☐ A. frontal fire on the enemy avenue of approach.
- ☐ B. flanking fires from defilade positions.
- ☐ C. them to attack the enemy's rear from terrain-masked positions.

5. You are allocating space for BFVs, ITVs, and Tanks to be used in the defense. As a guideline, in open terrain you would separate them by about

- ☐ A. 50 meters.
- ☐ B. 100 meters.
- ☐ C. 150 meters.
- ☐ D. 200 meters.

6. During the planning for the defense, you must integrate the combat support necessary to conduct the mission. The most important overall combat support priority that you must coordinate is

- ☐ A. logistical support for supplies and ammunition.
- ☐ B. engineer support for building defensive positions.
- ☐ C. reconnaissance to know where the enemy is at all times.
- ☐ D. fire support for destruction of enemy armored vehicles.

7. In finishing the plan, you must determine adjustments to the defensive positions during periods of limited visibility. You decide that positions changes due to darkness should be made

- ☐ A. before dark, and return to daylight positions before dawn.
- ☐ B. after dark, and return to daylight positions at dawn.
- ☐ C. before dark, and return to daylight positions at dawn.
- ☐ D. after dark, and return to daylight positions before dawn.

8. In the plan, you are including tactics for a retrograde operation. As a task force commander, you know that the brigade or division may conduct a retrograde action to (name 3 reasons)

and

9. As in planning the defense, each type of retrograde operation is designed to satisfy a commander's specific intent. Your unit is not in contact with the enemy. The brigade commander orders you to the rear. The type of retrograde that you would be

- ☐ A. assigned is a delay mission.
- ☐ B. ordered to perform is a withdrawal.
- ☐ C. conducting is a retirement.

10. You are planning a withdrawal action. You would anticipate that the Soviet elements in contact, on detection of your withdrawal, will immediately

- ☐ A. initiate a frontal pursuit.
- ☐ B. initiate parallel pursuit.
- ☐ C. occupy and hold the vacated terrain.
- ☐ D. reinforce and prepare for a counterattack.

11. During a retrograde action, you notice that the Soviets are using air reconnaissance planes. You know that these planes are used to determine (name 2 reasons for Soviet air reconnaissance)

PRACTICE EXERCISE 1

ANSWER KEY AND FEEDBACK

SITUATION: You are the commander of a battalion task force. Your TF is preparing a defensive position against a larger Soviet force. As part of the defense, you include a plan for a retrograde operation.

1. You are preparing the plan for the defense. Insuring METT-T to develop the plan, you first
 - A. calculate the manpower needed.
 - B. consider the mission.
 - C. determine the maneuver.
 - D. plan for needed munitions.
2. You are developing the execution matrix. In the matrix, you must enter the levels of preparation for the defensive mission. The three levels of preparation that enter are
 - A. occupy, prepare, and recon.
 - B. primary, intermediate, and advanced.
 - C. construct, occupy, and defend.
 - D. plan, select, and develop.
3. In preparing the plan, you are analyzing possible enemy avenues of approach. One possible approach route has short fields of fire, short-range observation, and considerable cover and concealment. You would classify this route as a
 - A. mounted avenue of approach.
 - B. dismounted avenue of approach.
 - C. mounted and dismounted avenue of approach.
4. In the plan, you are positioning your antiarmor units. You attempt to pick primary positions that will allow
 - A. frontal fire on the enemy avenue of approach.
 - B. flanking fires from defilade positions.
 - C. them to attack the enemy's rear from terrain-masked positions.

5. You are allocating space for BFVs, ITVs, and Tanks to be used in the defense. As a guideline, in open terrain you would separate them by about
- A. 50 meters.
 - B. 100 meters.
 - C. 150 meters.
 - D. 200 meters.
6. During the planning for the defense, you must integrate the combat support necessary to conduct the mission. The most important overall combat support priority that you must coordinate is
- A. logistical support for supplies and ammunition.
 - B. engineer support for building defensive positions.
 - C. reconnaissance to know where the enemy is at all times.
 - D. fire support for destruction of enemy armored vehicles.
7. In finishing the plan, you must determine adjustments to the defensive positions during periods of limited visibility. You decide that positions changes due to darkness should be made
- A. before dark, and return to daylight positions before dawn.
 - B. after dark, and return to daylight positions at dawn.
 - C. before dark, and return to daylight positions at dawn.
 - D. after dark, and return to daylight positions before dawn.
8. In the plan, you are including tactics for a retrograde operation. As a task force commander, you know that the brigade or division may conduct a retrograde action to (name 3 reasons)
- Avoid combat under unfavorable conditions
 - Gain time.
 - Reposition forces.
 - Permit the use of a force elsewhere.
 - Harass, exhaust, resist, and delay the enemy.
 - Draw the enemy into an unfavorable position.
 - Shorten lines of communications and supply.
 - Clear zones for friendly use of chemical or nuclear weapons.
 - Conform to the movement of other friendly forces.

9. As in planning the defense, each type of retrograde operation is designed to satisfy a commander's specific intent. Your unit is not in contact with the enemy. The brigade commander orders you to the rear. The type of retrograde that you would be
- A. assigned is a delay mission.
 - B. ordered to perform is a withdrawal.
 - C. conducting is a retirement.
10. You are planning a withdrawal action. You would anticipate that the Soviet elements in contact, on detection of your withdrawal, will immediately
- A. initiate a frontal pursuit.
 - B. initiate parallel pursuit.
 - C. occupy and hold the vacated terrain.
 - D. reinforce and prepare for a counterattack.
11. During a retrograde action, you notice that the Soviets are using air reconnaissance planes. You know that these planes are used to determine (name 2 reasons for Soviet air reconnaissance)
- The beginning of the withdrawal of rear area forces.
 - The composition of withdrawing forces and direction of movement.
 - The composition and direction of movement of the reserve force moving forward.
 - The nature of obstacles and intermediate defensive positions.

Lesson 2

PLANNING AND CONDUCTING RETROGRADE OPERATIONS

Lesson Description:

Planning and Conducting Retrograde Operations.

Terminal Learning Objective:

- Action:** Identify planning considerations and procedures, and operational methods and techniques for conducting retrograde operations.
- Condition:** Given the subcourse material contained in this lesson.
- Standard:** The student will demonstrate his comprehension and knowledge of the task by identifying planning considerations and procedures, and operational methods and techniques for conducting retrograde operations.
- The material in this lesson was derived from the following publication:
- References:** FM 71-21

Learning Event 1:

IDENTIFY THE PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS AND PROCEDURES, AND OPERATIONAL METHODS AND TECHNIQUES FOR CONDUCTING DELAY OPERATIONS

A delay is an operation in which a force trades space for time. It is designed to inflict maximum destruction on the enemy while avoiding decisive engagement. Delay is one of the Most demanding missions any unit can be assigned. The battalion task force may be given a deadly mission when employed as part of the covering force. A delay may also be assigned to the task force when they are acting as an economy-of-force element to conduct offensive operations in another sector.

The delay incorporates all of the aspects of a very dynamic defense. Particular consideration is given to preservation of the task force and maintaining a mobility advantage. Therefore, the task force attacks, defends, or conducts other actions (ambushes, raids, etc.) during the delay to destroy the enemy or to slow his advance. To be successful, the delaying force must preserve its freedom to maneuver and cause the enemy to deploy repeatedly.

The basic operational scheme of the delay is to force the enemy to deploy repeatedly against successive battle positions. As the enemy gets everything organized, the delaying force moves to a new set of battle positions. This will cause the enemy to once again go through the time-consuming process of redeploying against the new threat. In this process space is traded for time. The delay will be more difficult to execute if the initiative is left entirely to the enemy. Therefore, the task force commander

must seize the initiative whenever possible, even if for a short period of time and in a limited locale. When the retention of specified areas is required, when space is limited, or time requirements are long, the task force may defend in certain parts of the sector.

DELAY MISSIONS

A delay mission may take one of two forms:

- Delay in sector.

Example: DELAY THE ENEMY IN SECTOR NORTH OF BLUE RIVER UNTIL OBJECTIVE BLUE HAMMER IS SECURE.

- Delay forward of a specified line or position for a specified time.

Example: DELAY THE ENEMY WEST OF HIGHWAY 45 UNTIL 0900.

or

DELAY THE ENEMY NORTH OF PHASE LINE DOG UNTIL 071900, DELAY THE ENEMY NORTH OF PHASE LINE BEAR FROM 071900 UNTIL 082100.

Normally, a battalion task force will delay in sector unless the factors of METT-T dictate delaying from a specified battle position (BP). When a battle is across a broad front, companies and platoons will normally be assigned specific BPs. This enhances the command, control, and coordination of the battle. However, they may be assigned to delay in sector if it would best support the commander's intent.

In a delay, a determination must be made as to whether the preservation of the force or time is more important. This must be clearly stated in the commander's intent. A delay of an enemy forward of a line for a specified period implies a relatively significant degree of risk and possible loss of the force. A delay in sector without restricting time, control, guidance, and control measures implies a relatively lower degree of risk and fewer losses. Commanders and staffs must consider all factors and possible contingencies when a risk versus time trade-off is made.

Fundamentals of the Delay

For a unit to successfully delay, leaders and soldiers must understand and exercise some basic fundamentals. They are essentially the same fundamentals used in conducting a defensive operation. However, a delay differs from the defense in that a delay does not necessarily intend to destroy the enemy. Also, in a delay, decisive engagement is avoided if the required delay can be achieved without it. For those reasons, the following considerations must be applied when planning and executing a delay.

Centralized Control and Decentralized Execution. A delay action is normally done on a wide front with maximum forces in contact and minimum forces in reserve. This results in a series of independent actions by units across the front. Each commander must retain his freedom of action to engage the enemy.

In the delay, the unit must maintain enemy contact and flank security. This will ensure that the enemy does not bypass or surround elements of the delay force. It will also prevent the enemy from

penetrating friendly forces and hindering or endangering the successful accomplishment of the delay mission.

Maximum Use of Terrain. Delay forces must make maximum use of all terrain from which the delay of the enemy can be obtained. Delay positions should be on terrain features that control the likely avenues of enemy approach.

Force the Enemy to Deploy and Maneuver. Normally, the enemy should be engaged at maximum ranges of all weapons. This causes the enemy to deploy and maneuver in reaction to the fire. This takes time, which the friendly force commander needs. Repeated use of this technique will slow the enemy and will allow the commander to exchange space for time.

Maximum use of Obstacles. The use of demolitions, mines, and artificial and natural obstacles is recommended. This will slow the enemy's progress and enable the commander to canalize the enemy in order to have flank and rear shots. To be most effective, cover the obstacles with reinforcing fires.

Maintain Contact with the Enemy. Continuous reconnaissance must be conducted to maintain contact with the enemy. Enemy forces possessing freedom of maneuver and mobility will attempt to bypass or envelop the flanks. They may also attempt to penetrate between the units conducting the delay. To prevent penetration or envelopment, contact must be maintained with all enemy forces encountered.

Avoid Decisive Engagement. In a delay action, positions must be occupied long enough to cause the enemy to deploy, force him to develop the situation, and maneuver to attack each position. The delay force normally moves from one delay position to another without becoming decisively engaged with the enemy unless specifically required. If units conducting the delay become decisively engaged, they may fail in their mission and jeopardize the entire operations.

Planning the Delay

As in all combat operations, a delay is planned using the decision-making process, factors of METT-T, operations and staff estimates, and troop leading procedures. The planning steps for a delay operation are the same as for a defensive operation. They are:

- Receive and analyze the mission.
- Analyze enemy avenues of approach.
- Select tentative positions/tasks.
- Allocate forces.
- Task organize/assign missions.
- Integrate indirect fires and obstacles.
- Finish the plan.

The tasks required to perform those planning steps in defense or delay are the same. However, some considerations and factors of METT-T are applied differently because of the differences in a defense and a delay operation. Those considerations are listed in the following paragraphs.

Maintain a Mobility Advantage. Delaying forces must maintain a mobility advantage over the attacker. Enemy closure rates for the terrain should be calculated and compared to friendly displacement rates between positions. Comparison of the time-distance factors dictates to the commander the amount of time he has to engage the enemy and move his unit before becoming decisively engaged.

To do this, estimated enemy rates of advance and formations should be applied to the avenues of approach. This will tell the commander where the enemy will be at certain times. This knowledge will help him to decide where to emplace obstacles and what obstacles to use. It will also help him to determine if or where decisive engagement is likely or required to achieve the delay.

An illustration of the problem facing the commander follows:

If the enemy is moving at approximately 15 mph, it will take him approximately 9 minutes to close on friendly positions from a distance of 3 kilometers.

The commander must use clearly defined decision points as to when he will displace. If this planning is not properly conducted, the task force faces the possibility of being fixed or overrun.

The use of obstacles slows the possibility of being fixed or overrun. The use of obstacles slows the enemy's advance. This allows the task force to engage the enemy while he is deploying to breach the obstacle. The commander can then displace at the appropriate time without concern that the enemy will be right on his heels.

Assign Sectors of Responsibility. In planning for a delay, sectors of responsibility are assigned to each committed unit down through company team level. The limits of each sector are set off by boundaries. These boundaries may extend through the depth of the sector and, as a minimum, must extend through the next rear area delay line.

In assigning sectors to subordinate units, each likely enemy avenue of approach is assigned, in its entirety, to one unit. Boundaries are assigned so that terrain features which control the fire and observation into a sector are assigned to the unit responsible for the sector. Contact and coordinating points are designated to ensure continuity.

Natural obstacles are improved and artificial obstacles are built. Obstacles alone must not be relied upon to halt the enemy's progress.

Organize Battle Positions. Battle positions (BPs) similar to those used in the defense are organized in the delay. However, in a delay, more emphasis is placed on reconnaissance and preparation of routes of withdrawal. Each mechanized rifle squad and tank crew should be familiar with the routes from their primary, alternate, and supplementary positions. Less emphasis is placed on the installation of tactical and protective wire, final protective fires, and stockpiling of ammunition. The position is organized in width with little depth.

Graphic Controls. The graphic control measures a commander chooses must accurately portray his intent. Verbal or written instructions are very important, but use of graphic control measures, depicted on overlays, provides the critical back-up for these orders. Casualties and breaks in radio communications are expected in battle. Therefore, poor or inaccurate control measures may endanger the success of a delay before it ever starts. Control measures used in the delay will include:

- Phase lines of all higher commands.
- Supplemental phase lines.
- Checkpoints.
- Delay positions (shown as BPs).
- Engagement areas and target reference points.
- Passage points.
- Assembly points, main supply routes, and resupply points.
- Coordinating points.
- Sectors.
- Routes.

Methods of Delay

There are two types of delay operations.

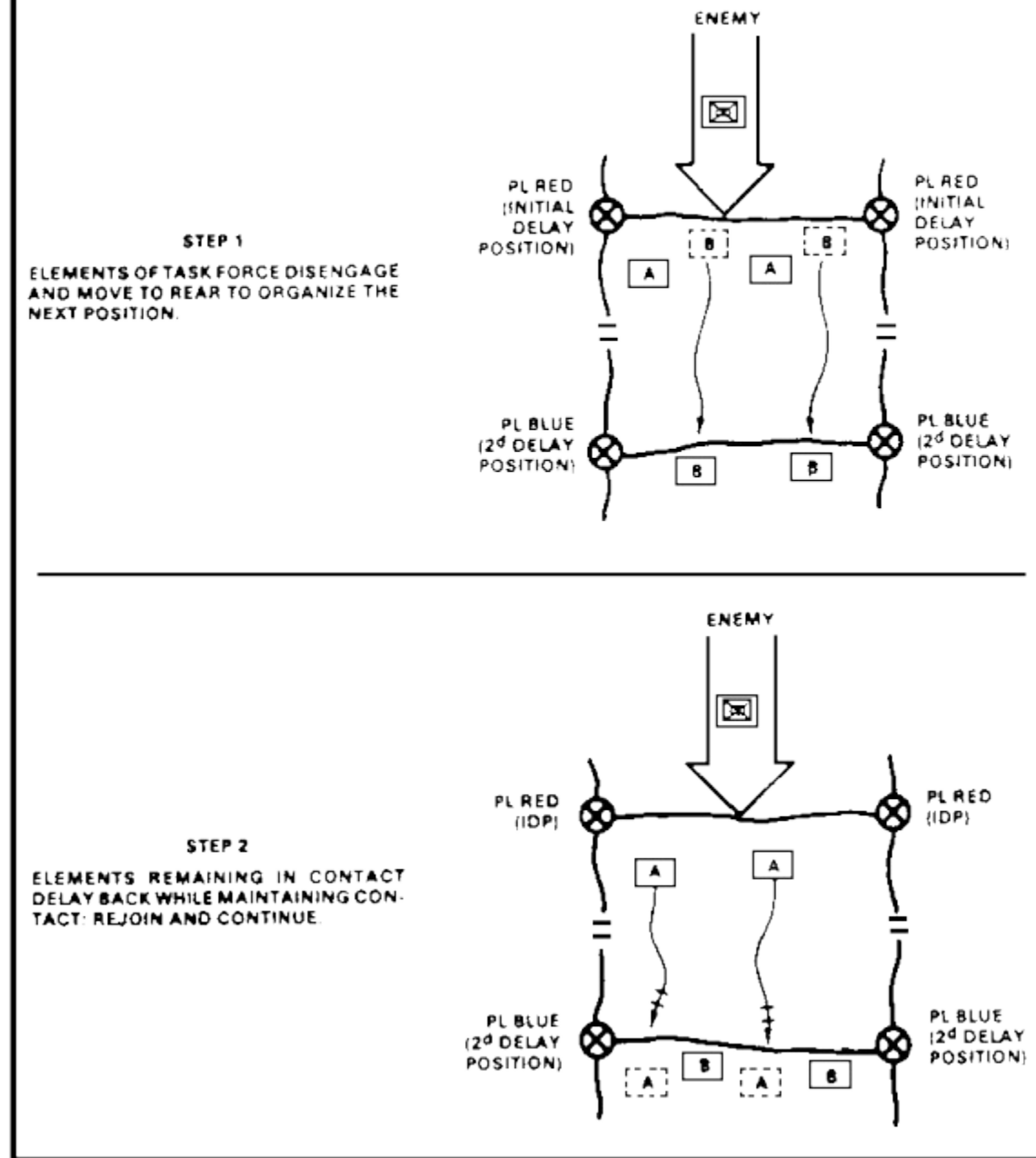
Delay on Successive Positions. This delay is used when a sector is so wide that available forces cannot occupy more than a single tier of sectors. The disadvantage of delay on successive positions is that penetration is easier. This is caused by the lack of depth, less time to prepare subsequent positions, and possible gaps between units.

Delay on Alternate Positions. This delay may be used when a task force has a narrow sector or has been reinforced to allow positioning in depth.

Method of Delay on Successive Positions

Delay on successive positions is the conduct of a delaying operation by fighting rearward successively from one position to the next. Each position is held as long as possible or for a specified period of time. In this type of delay, all company teams are normally committed on each of the battalion task force delay positions or across the sector on the same phase line ([figure 6](#)).

FIGURE 6. DELAY FROM SUCCESSIVE POSITIONS



When ordered to move, the task force disengages, moves, and occupies the next designated delay position. Normally, the unit displaces the most engaged elements first. The element's move is covered by its own protective fire and supporting fires from other elements. The battalion task force scouts maintain contact with the enemy between the first position and the next delay position. The enemy is once again engaged when he comes within the maximum effective range of the next delay position. When the battalion task force is no longer able to hold the position without becoming decisively engaged, the movement procedure is repeated.

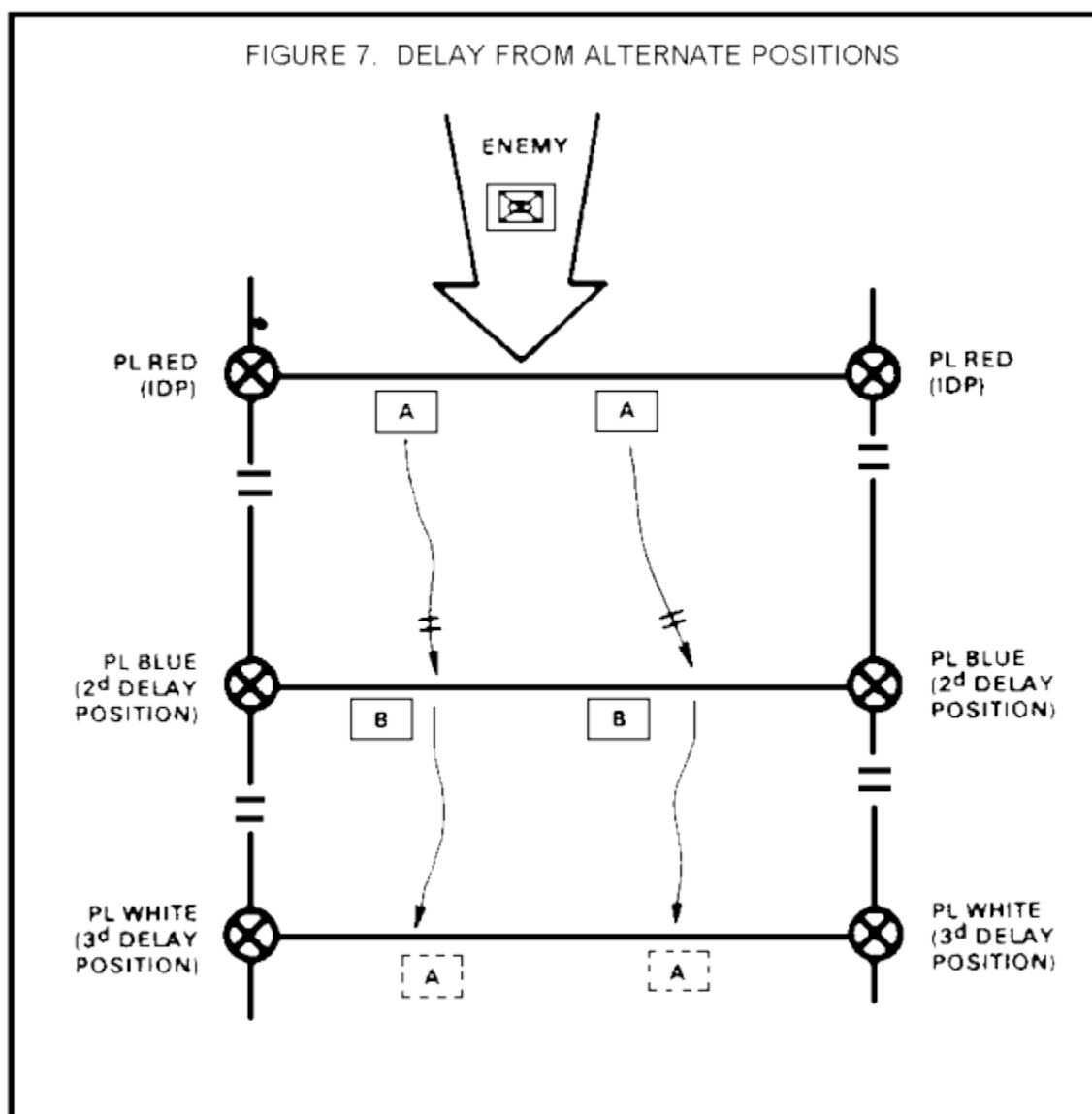
Method of Delay on Alternate Positions

Delay on alternate positions may be used when a task force has a narrow sector or has been reinforced to allow positioning in depth. Employing this method, one element occupies the initial delay position and engages the enemy. The other element occupies and prepares the second delay position.

These elements alternate movement in the delay. While one element is fighting, the other occupies the next position in depth and prepares to assume responsibility for the fight.

Units occupying the initial delay position delay on that position and, on order, delay between it and the second delay position. When the delaying units arrive at the second delay position, they either move through or around the units occupying that position. After moving past the second delay position, the units move to and occupy the third delay position. Responsibility for delaying the enemy is assumed by the units in the second delay position.

The delaying procedure is then repeated, with each element being alternately in contact. Elements in the rearward position overwatch the forces that are in contact and provide covering fire for their rearward movement ([figure 7](#), below).



Reconnaissance and Selection of Delay Positions

A reconnaissance of delay positions is made as early as possible. Likely avenues of approach are located and plans are made to deny their use to the enemy. In selecting positions, the commander considers the same factors as those used in selecting any defensive position. Positions should incorporate as many of the following characteristics as possible:

- Unaffordable rivers, swamps, lakes, and other water obstacles on the front and flanks.
- Good observation and long-range fields of fire.
- Covered or concealed routes of movement to the rear.
- A road net or areas providing good cross country trafficability.

Assign Sectors. The commander assigns company team sectors corresponding to the most likely avenues of approach available to the enemy. Where possible, a company team is assigned one major avenue of approach and the terrain dominating that avenue. Each company team sector should include at least one good route for rearward movement.

The reserve, if used, is located initially in an area from which it can counterattack or move rapidly to reinforce the delay forces, at any threatened point.

Command Post and Combat Trains. The battalion task force command post (CP) and combat trains are located well to the rear. They are normally located behind the next rearward phase line. This prevents request displacement and interference with actions of combat elements. The command group remains in positions best suited to control the operation. Normally, this is well forward with the engaged elements. The command group is usually part of the last elements to leave the area.

How to Conduct the Delay

The initial delay position is occupied in the same manner as a defensive position. The same techniques of security and priority of work apply in conducting the delay. The use of deception to make the enemy think he will encounter a determined defense may increase the amount of delay obtained.

Initial Fires. As the enemy approaches, he is taken under long-range fires. Every effort is made to inflict maximum casualties on the enemy, disorganize him, and force him to stop for reorganization. If the enemy should mass, he becomes susceptible to the task force's fires.

Avoid Decisive Engagement. Decisive engagement is avoided except when necessary to accomplish the mission. Each position occupied by a forward unit is deafened until the enemy threatens close engagement or envelopment of the position.

Changing Defensive Positions. The task force commander makes recommendation to the brigade commander on the appropriate time to move from brigade-designated delay positions. However, he does not move without concurrence from the brigade commander. The task force commander may make the decision to move from positions selected by the task force. He must coordinate with higher and adjacent units before initiating the move. The movement may begin in accordance with prearranged plans, on order of the higher commander, or to prevent decisive engagement. As the task force may be more vulnerable as it moves, move only after considering the following questions:

- What is the strength, composition, and location of the enemy attacking force?
- Are elements of the battalion threatened with decisive engagement or bypass?
- What is the status of adjacent units?
- How does this factor affect the task force's capability to continue the delay?
- What is the condition of the delay force in terms of losses in men, equipment, and morale?
- If extensive effort has been put into preparation of the position or if it is the last one available, the task force commander may be forced to accept closer engagement.
- If it is a timed delay and the task force has gained only one hour of an anticipated five hours on the position, additional efforts may be required to retain the position. However, the condition that imposes time requirements are subject to change.
- Can other means be used, besides movement, to continue the delay (for example, conventional fires spoiling attacks, reinforcements).

When the maximum or the required delay has been achieved, the movement to the next delay position begins. Coordination of fires between the moving element and adjacent, supporting, and overwatch elements is critical. Primary and backup signals for exact locations of the lead, trail, and flank elements must be planned for all conditions of visibility. This will ensure the optimum effectiveness of the available combat power.

Disengagement. If elements of the task force are threatened with decisive engagement or have become decisively engaged, the commander must make a decision as to his next action. Disengagement from the enemy is necessary. Options that the commander may choose from (in order of priority) are:

- Allocate priority of all indirect supporting fires to the threatened unit. This is the most rapid and responsive method of increasing the combat power of the unit.
- Direct adjacent units to engage enemy targets forward of the threatened unit.
- Reposition combat and combat support elements so that they can reinforce the unit. This may necessitate changes in missions or in task organization.
- Conduct a counterattack to disengage. The task force commander must make a rapid, yet cautious, evaluation of the potential gains or losses of this course of action. The counterattack force may suffer heavy casualties from enemy second-echelon or overwatching elements. If the decision is made to counterattack, the commander ensures that the attack is carefully executed.

Using the Reserve. During the conduct of the delay, all forces may be deployed. To constitute a reserve, the task force commander may designate the least engaged force to perform reserve missions. This is particularly true when delaying on successive positions. In the alternate method, the reserve may consist of an element in depth. Reserve missions include:

- Reinforcement.
- Spoiling attacks.

- Assisting in disengagement.
- Providing overwatch.
- Assumption of another unit's mission.
- Counterattack.
- Block.

Reconstitution of Forces. Reconstitution of forces may be SOP, but it requires attention to detail. Reconstitution should be continuous to provide continuity throughout the battle. Key leaders must be replaced, ammunition redistributed, and elements reorganized. It may be necessary to integrate individuals, squads, or platoons into other units to maintain combat power. The chain of command must be more than two deep to ensure a logical replacement sequence and minimize confusion.

Crew-served weapons receive a priority of manning, and ammunition is cross-leveled to ensure the maximum use of all systems. Radios are replaced on critical nets (command and control, fire direction, and fire support).

Command and Control. Command and control of the delay will require close coordination. The successive delay technique may be easier to control than the alternate position technique. In the alternate position method, the task force commander may initially be well forward, with the executive officer in charge of the position in depth. The commander may take charge of the forces in depth once the forward elements move back. The executive officer is then responsible for reconstituting the forces and supervising the preparation of the next positions. A plan for command and control must be made so that the delay can be executed as smoothly as possible.

Use of Combat Vehicles. In conducting the delay against a highly mobile enemy force, combat vehicles should be used. Their speed, mobility, firepower, and armor protection are critical to the delaying forces staying power and survivability.

Generally, the delay is conducted by company teams occupying and delaying from battalion delay positions. The combination of tanks and mechanized infantry optimizes the use of the task force. Tanks provide staying power and permit maximum delay. Dismounted infantry provide protection to tanks, improved TOW vehicles (ITVs), as well as carrier/- fighting vehicle teams. Long-range weapons permit early engagement, increased enemy casualties, and longer delay.

Follow-up Action. Delays are not an end to themselves. Each delay operation must end with a planned result, such as a defense, a withdrawal, or an attack.

This concludes the first learning event. You should now be able to identify the considerations for planning a delay action. You should also know the operational methods and techniques for conducting delay operations.

The next learning event will introduce you to the two other types of retrograde: withdrawals and retirements. This Learning Event will familiarize you with the procedures for planning and conducting withdrawal and retirement operations.

Learning Event 2:

IDENTIFY THE PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS AND PROCEDURES, AND OPERATIONAL METHODS AND TECHNIQUES FOR CONDUCTING WITHDRAWAL AND RETIREMENT OPERATIONS

Two other types of retrograde actions are the withdrawal and the retirement. These types of retrograde operations differ from the delay in that the purpose of these operations is to move to the rear as quickly as possible. Delay of the enemy is used only as a protective measure for the withdrawing elements.

WITHDRAWAL OPERATIONS

A withdrawal is an operation in which all or part of a force frees itself for a new mission. It may be executed at any time, by any size force, during any type of operation. Preferably, withdrawal is made while a unit is not under heavy enemy pressure. To deceive the enemy, armored and mechanized forces move with as much secrecy as possible. All withdrawing elements use techniques that keep the withdrawal hidden from enemy observation and fires.

A withdrawal is conducted:

- To disengage from the enemy.
- When the task force commander finds it necessary to reposition all or part of his force.
- To attain separation for employment of nuclear or chemical weapons.

Types of Withdrawals

There are two types of withdrawals. They are:

- Withdrawal under enemy pressure.
- Withdrawal not under enemy pressure.

Both types are conducted while the battalion is in contact with the enemy. The primary difference is the intensity of enemy pressure.

Withdrawal Under Enemy Pressure. A withdrawal under enemy pressure depends on maneuver, firepower, and control. This is required because the enemy will be attempting to drive the task force from its position.

Withdrawal Not Under Enemy Pressure. A withdrawal not under enemy pressure requires deception and depends upon speed of execution. If the task force is not under attack and does not expect to be attacked during withdrawal, then withdrawal is not under enemy pressure.

Assisted and unassisted Withdrawal

Withdrawals are either assisted or unassisted. An assisted withdrawal uses a covering force provided by the next higher headquarters. This force assists the main body in breaking contact from the enemy and provides overwatching fires.

In an unassisted withdrawal, the task force provides its own covering force.

Planning Considerations for a Withdrawal

Planning the withdrawal involves attention to detail, thorough briefing, maximum dissemination of the plan, and reconnaissance by all subordinate elements. Planning guidance is basically the same as outlined in planning a delay. In order to successfully withdraw, the task force must:

- Keep enemy pressure off the withdrawing forces.
- Maintain security.
- Gain a mobility advantage.
- Reconnoiter and prepare routes for the withdrawal.
- Allow early withdrawal of non-essential assets.
- Move elements of the task force as early as possible.
- Move at night or in periods of limited visibility.
- Use obstacles to slow the enemy.
- Concentrate all available fires on enemy forces.

The following paragraphs go into more detail in describing each planning consideration for a withdrawal operation.

Keep Enemy Pressure Off the Withdrawing Forces. Elements are positioned to delay the enemy. Obstacles, covered by direct and indirect fires, are used to top or slow his advance. Enemy overwatch elements, which can fire on withdrawing forces, and enemy supporting fire, which can disrupt the withdrawal, must be suppressed or obscured.

Maintain Security. Enemy tactics emphasize bypass and encirclement of withdrawing or defending forces. Avenues of approach that the enemy could use must be guarded. Critical chokepoints along withdrawal routes must also be guarded.

Gain a Mobility Advantage. Elements of the battalion must maintain a mobility advantage in order to effectively move away from the enemy. This mobility advantage can and must be developed against either an armor or infantry threat. An advantage can be gained by increasing the mobility of the battalion and/or reducing the mobility for the enemy. The use of various means of transportation such as trucks, helicopters, and tanks would obviously increase the battalion's mobility. Their use would also reduce the enemy's ability to pursue.

Reconnoiter and Prepare Routes for the Withdrawal. Reconnoiter and prepare routes which allow rapid movement. Control of the movement may determine the success or failure of the mission. The battalion task force commander should assign a specific route for each company team. Routes are improved as necessary, marked, and/or posted with guides. If two or more units must move on one route, a priority of movement is established.

Allow Early Withdrawal of Non-essential Assets. Allow early withdrawal of non-essential command and control and service support assets. This reduces congestion and the likelihood of enemy detection. The lower density of elements also reduces the effects of enemy fire.

Move Elements of the Task Force as Early as Possible. Move elements of the task force trains out of the task force area as early in the withdrawal as possible. This provides protection and minimizes congestion when maneuver elements begin movement. Advance parties from the task force and company teams accompany these elements during the withdrawal. They will assist in organizing new positions and/or marking routes. The S4 usually is charged with supervising this movement. The scout platoon may also move with the trains element when necessary to provide security and to post routes and guides.

Move at Night or Periods of Limited Visibility. Limited visibility conditions can be natural (rain, fog, or snow) or they can be created through the use of smoke. Limited visibility provides concealment for moving units and reduces the effectiveness of enemy fire. Limited visibility also reduces the mobility of an attacker to a far greater degree than that of a unit moving on prepared and marked routes.

Use obstacles to Slow the Enemy. Use natural or artificial obstacles to slow or stop the enemy. Units are positioned so that natural obstacles (streams, steep slopes, etc.) are between them and the enemy. Artificial obstacles reinforce natural obstacles and are planned in-depth on likely enemy approaches to slow the enemy's advance. All road and bridges not required by friendly forces are destroyed.

Concentrate All Available Fires on Enemy Forces. Concentration of all available fires slows the enemy's advance. Combined fires, combined with obstacles and limited visibility, provide more time for the force to withdraw. Movement is alternated between elements, as required, to make sure at least a portion of the force can place direct or indirect fires on the enemy.

Phase of Withdrawal Operation

Withdrawals will generally be accomplished in three overlapping phases. They are the preparatory phase, the disengagement phase, and the security phase. Each phase will be discussed in detail in the following paragraphs.

Preparatory Phase. Reconnaissance and quartering elements are dispatched, warning orders are issued, and detailed planning is initiated. Elements not required to support the operation, such as trains, the tactical operations center (TOC), and nonessential vehicles are relocated to the rear. As time allows, obstacles are prepared to slow enemy movement. If appropriate, preparation is begun on rearward positions to be occupied.

Disengagement Phase. Designated elements begin their movement to the rear. When contact with the enemy is broken, they assemble and conduct a tactical movement to a preplanned subsequent position.

Security Phase. A security element assists disengagement of other elements and assumes responsibility for the battalion sector. They also deceive the enemy and protect the movement of disengaged elements, as necessary, through the use of fire and maneuver. This phase ends when security forces have conducted a rearward passage through the next occupied position to the rear.

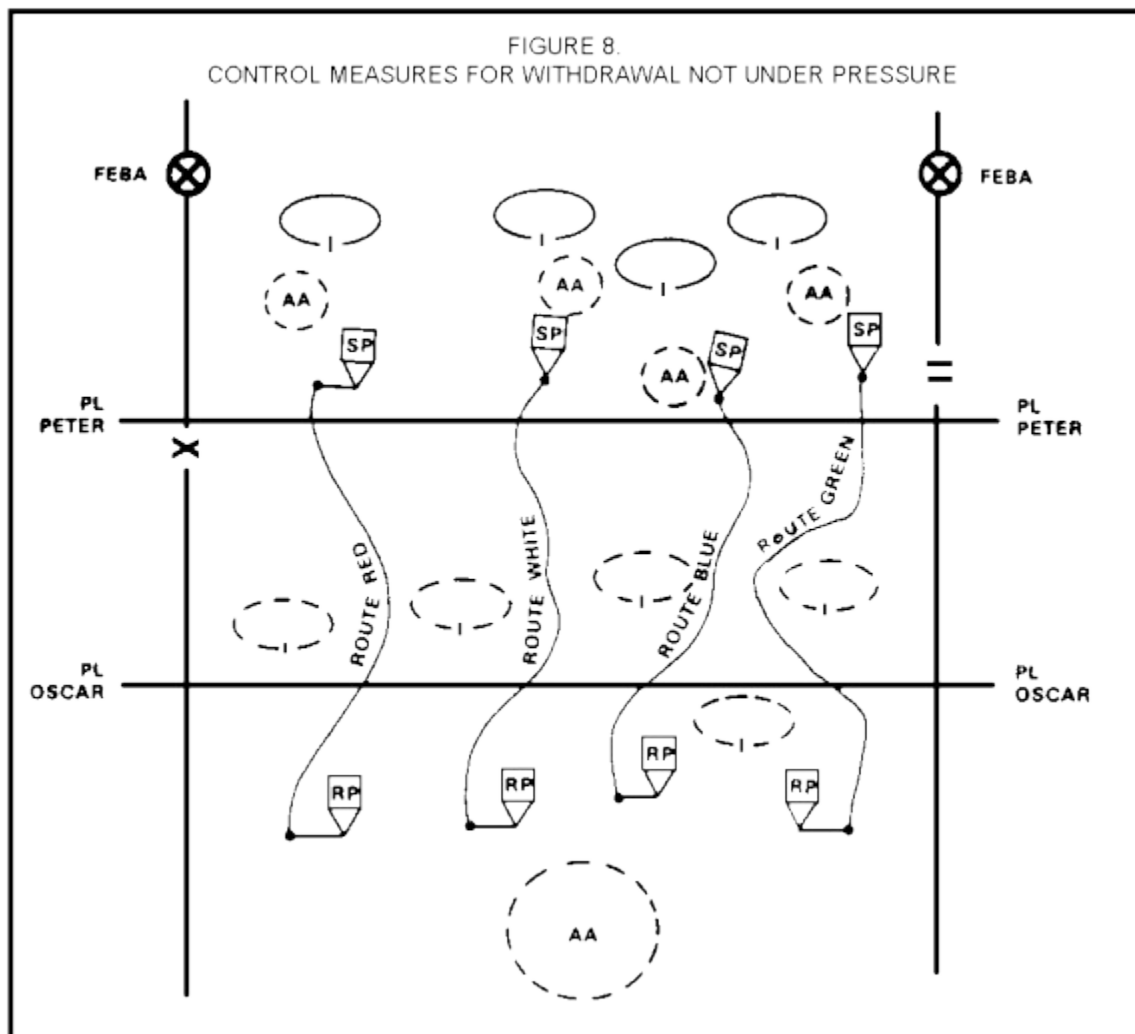
Conducting a Withdrawal Not Under Enemy Pressure

In a withdrawal not under enemy pressure, deception and operations security (OPSEC) are essential to the success of the operation. The enemy must not be aware that a withdrawal is taking place. Deceptive measures that can be used are:

- A detachment left in contact (DLIC) can deceive the enemy into believing that friendly forces are still in position. This is accomplished by simulating or continuing normal element activities.
- Communications can be continued. Radio traffic should not be increased or decreased.
- Patrolling activities, if established, can continue.
- Limited visibility can be used to cover the withdrawal. OPSEC complements the deception plan. Radio traffic is the same as usual; transmit nothing that might compromise the intention to withdraw. Maintain noise and light discipline. Mask the sounds of movement by creating natural noises, such as artillery fire.

Control Measures for the Withdrawal. Prior to the withdrawal, conduct a thorough reconnaissance and establish control measures to ensure effective command and control. It is advisable for each company to conduct its own reconnaissance with its key leaders. Key leaders need to know the plan of withdrawal in detail.

During the reconnaissance, key leaders familiarize themselves with start points, routes, release points, and assembly areas. Select routes based on the cover and concealment they provide, with a minimum of chokepoints ([figure 8](#), below). Conduct the reconnaissance during a condition of visibility that approximates the withdrawal conditions. This may entail a daylight and a night reconnaissance. Use guides, if necessary, to ensure that units move in the right direction.



Issuing Movement Orders. The task force commander usually tells the company team commanders:

- When the withdrawal will start.
- The location of each company team assembly area.
- Where the task force assembly area is located.
- What routes to take from the company team assembly area to the task force assembly area.
- What each company team is to do upon arrival at the task force assembly area.
- The size, composition, mission, and commander of the DLIC.
- Subsequent task force and company team missions.

Organizing the Detachment Left in Contact (DLIC). The success of the withdrawal not under enemy pressure depends on the speed of execution and deception. The task force commander intends to break contact and move to a new location without detection by the enemy. Therefore, a withdrawal not under pressure will, if possible, be conducted rapidly at night or during other periods of reduced visibility. In most situations, a DLIC deceives the enemy and protects the withdrawing elements as the main body of

the battalion task force disengages. When the task force has a mobility advantage over enemy forces, simultaneous disengagement and movement by all task force elements without a DLIC may be feasible. If the withdrawal is being conducted by more than one task force, the brigade order may specify the use of a DLIC.

In a withdrawal not under enemy pressure, you normally organize a DLIC from elements from each company in contact with or near the enemy. A portion of the battalion command element will exercise command and control over the DLIC in order to simulate normal task force activities. The battalion executive officer may be in charge of the battalion DLIC, with company executive officers in charge of their respective DLICs. One method is for the task force commander to leave a company team intact as the DLIC, under the control of the company team commander. When that occurs, repositioning of the elements of the company team to cover the entire battalion sector is necessary.

Within limitations imposed by brigade, the task force commander prescribes the size of the DLIC. He may also indicate that specific elements remain (tanks, ITVs, and carrier/fighting vehicles, etc.) as the base for the DLIC force. The DLIC must be able to detect and engage the enemy on all avenues of approach into and through the position. The location of the DLIC should provide an ability to fight if the enemy attacks during the withdrawal.

The Reserves. Reserves or elements positioned in depth within the battalion sector may withdraw before, during, or after the disengaging elements of the forward companies. Generally, they will withdraw after these elements. This provides an added degree of flexibility and security in the event the enemy detects the withdrawal and attacks.

Reserves may withdraw before the bulk of the forward units when a security force is provided from a higher level. They also may withdraw prior to the main body when preparation for the future mission of the task force is of a higher priority than the security the reserve could offer to the withdrawing units.

The Main Body. The main body of the task force is composed of all maneuver, combat support, and control elements not required by the DLIC. Its mission is to disengage using stealth, move along designated routes, assemble, and move to a new location in preparation for the next mission.

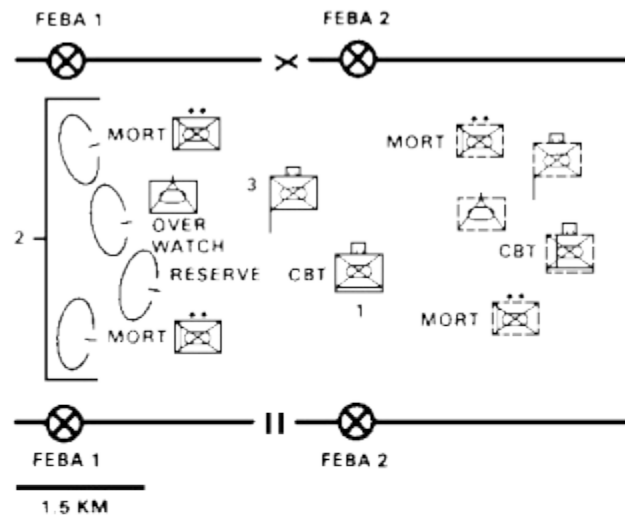
The main body moves on designated routes to the next position. The task force commander establishes the priority of unit movement. Main body elements may also be given on-order missions to defend, delay, or counterattack during the withdrawal ([Figures 9A](#) and [9B](#)).

FIGURE 9A. WITHDRAWAL NOT UNDER ENEMY PRESSURE

1. Prior to the effective time of the withdrawal, vehicles and personnel not required and quartering parties from the battalion task force move to their subsequent positions using infiltration techniques.

2. At the time designated for the withdrawal, forward elements not required by the DLIC leave their positions, move to the rear, and assemble.

3. Elements in depth, or reserves, may assemble if widely dispersed and move to the rear based on priorities of the task force commander. Normally, these elements do not provide a portion of the overwatch force.



4. Elements of the main body move to the rear either on order of the commander in accordance with prepared plans and priorities.

5. In this situation, the task force commander would likely leave his reserve in position until other elements have begun their movement, because of the lack of a higher level security force and the availability of only three routes to the rear.

6. Once the forward company teams have cleared a given point (a phase line in this case), the reserve would move to its new position and begin preparation for its next mission.

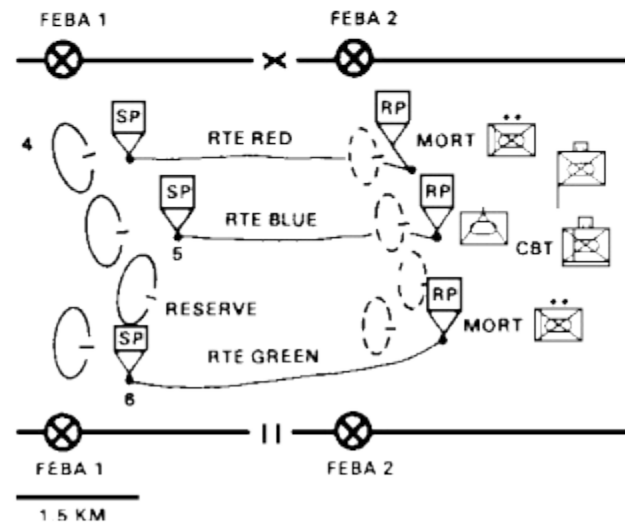
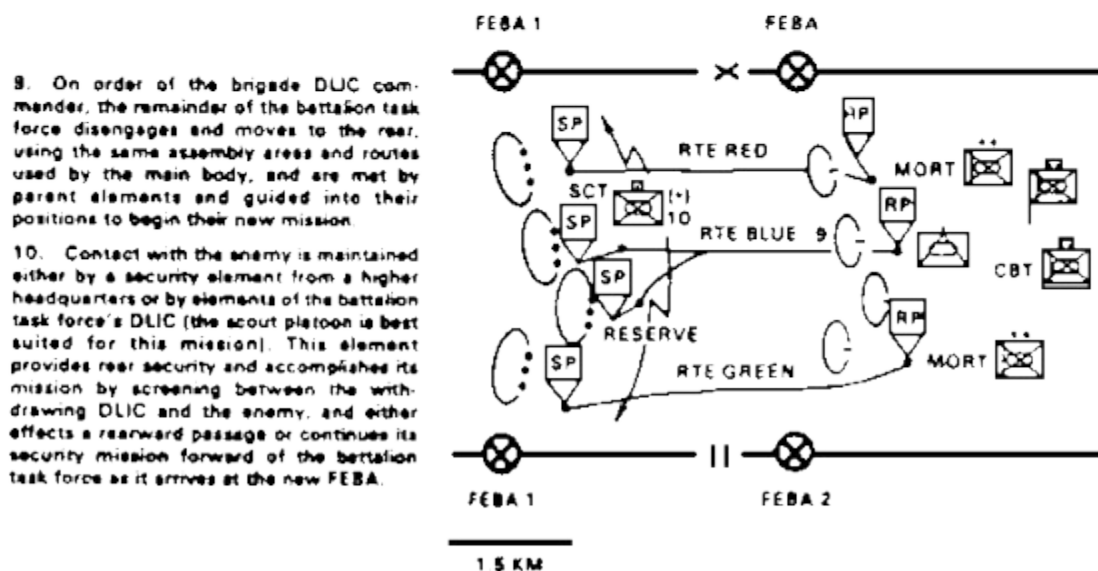
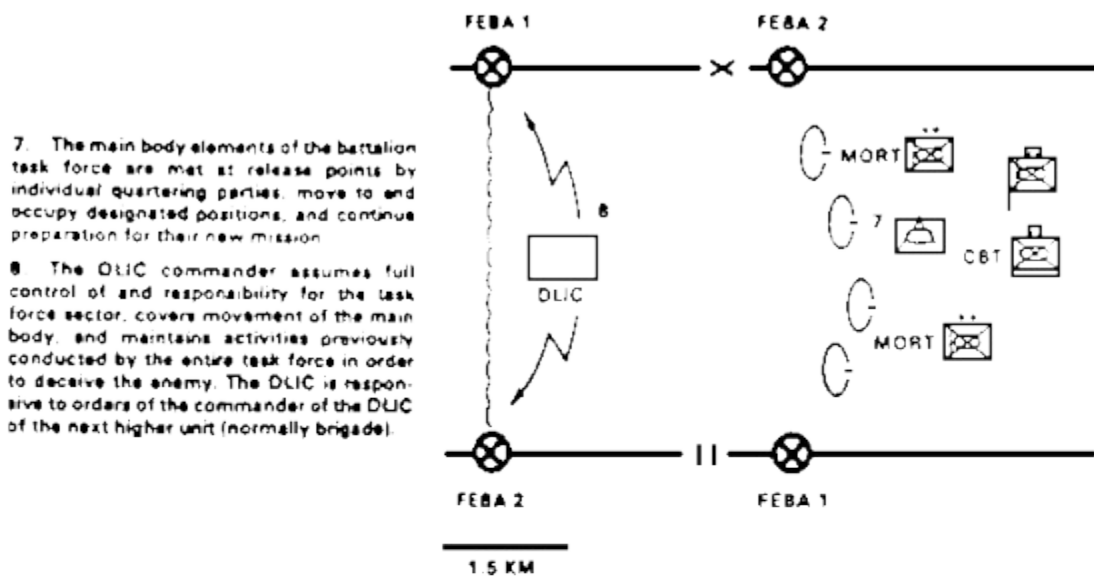


FIGURE 9B. WITHDRAWAL NOT UNDER ENEMY PRESSURE

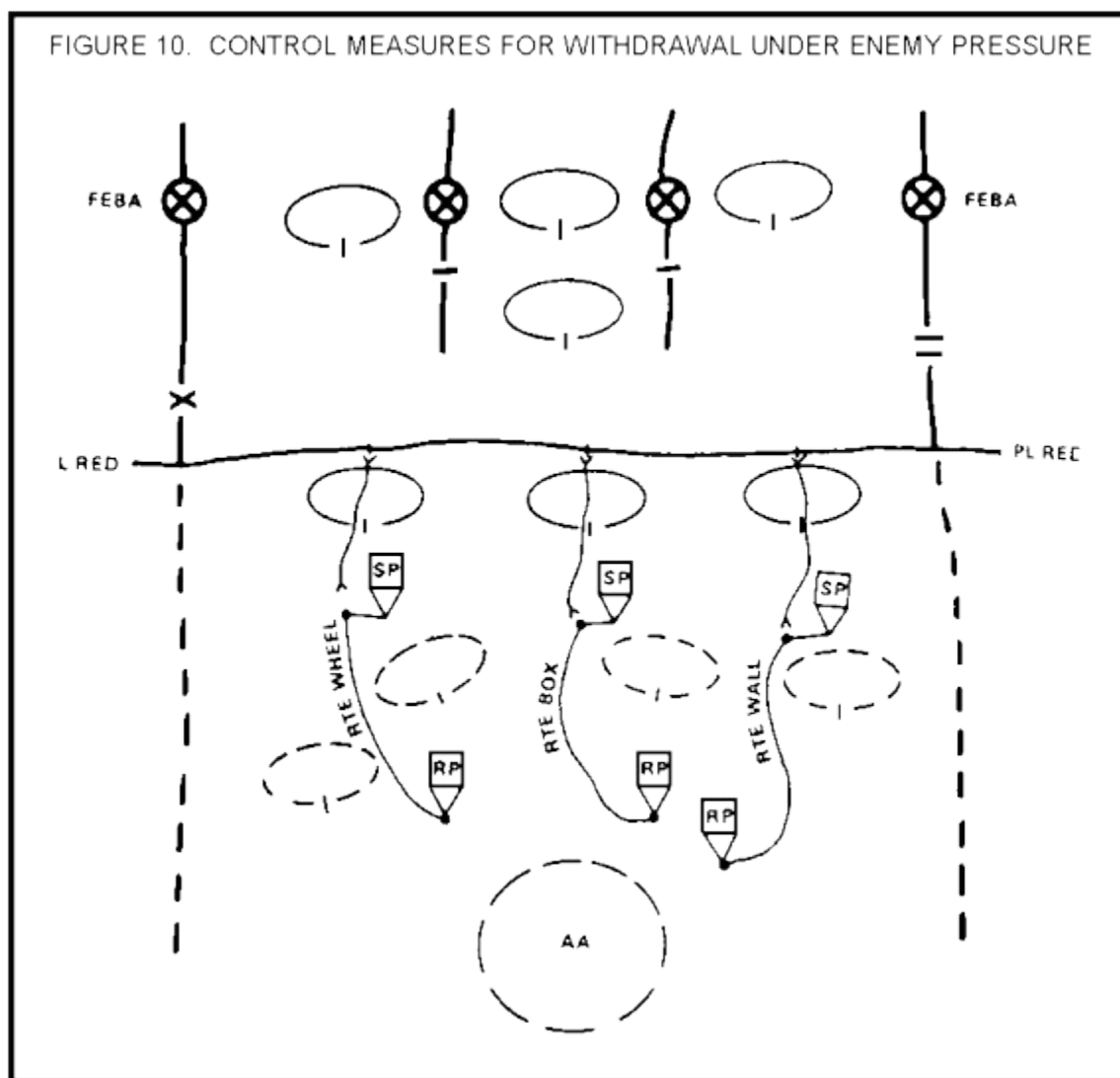


Withdrawal Under Enemy Pressure

The sequence of events in a withdrawal under enemy pressure is different from a withdrawal not under enemy pressure. In a withdrawal under pressure, a reconnaissance is conducted to the rear, time permitting. The reconnaissance is conducted to identify routes that offer the best cover and concealment. The reconnaissance also determines the requirements for engineer assistance to clear obstacles in the route. The planning closely resembles that of the delay in regard to the use of available organic and nonorganic assets.

Control Measures. The battalion commander should prescribe specific control measures ([figure 10](#)) to maintain order during the withdrawal under enemy pressure. These measures can include:

- Sectors.
- Battle positions.
- Phase lines.
- Routes.
- Passage lanes.
- Contact points.



The Security Force. Success of the withdrawal under pressure is dependent upon effectively disengaging by fire and movement. The security force provides fire support during the withdrawal.

The security force is the unit or element given the mission to provide security for the withdrawal. There are options available on the organization and deployment of the security force. If the situation permits, a unit may be placed in an overwatch position to provide security for the withdrawal.

This situation is dependent upon terrain, enemy mobility, and the amount of pressure being applied. Such a mission could be assigned to a unit in reserve or provided by a higher headquarters. The forward company teams would use fire and movement to fight their way behind the security forces, who would pick up the battle.

To assist withdrawing elements, a security force must be able to detect and engage the enemy on all avenues of approach. This enables the bulk of the task force to disengage. If the terrain restricts the observation of the security enemy to short ranges, it will be necessary to form the security force from forward company team elements. The elements will position themselves to observe high speed approaches. They will direct efforts of artillery, mortars, tactical air, and air cavalry in support of the force as required. Their mission during the withdrawal is to:

- Disrupt, disorganize, or retard the enemy's capability to pursue withdrawing elements of the battalion.
- Reduce, through the use of smoke, the enemy's capability to observe movement of the task force, thereby assisting units in disengaging.
- Rapidly concentrate additional combat power in critical areas to assist in disengagement or prevent decisive engagement of battalion elements.

Withdrawal Procedures. As the order to withdraw is given, elements engage the enemy with concentrated direct and indirect fire. These fires, coupled with obstacles and the proper use of terrain, create a temporary mobility advantage for the withdrawing force. This enables the elements to disengage, assemble, and move to their next position.

The security force picks up the fight from the disengaging forward elements. They assume responsibility for the entire battalion sector and delay the enemy advance while the bulk of the unit moves to the rear. On order, the security force will disengage and move to the rear. Depending on the task force's next mission, the security force may be required to maintain contact with the enemy throughout the operation by fighting to the rear. On order, the security force may join the main body or pass through the next occupied position and move on a route to its prescribed position.

Provisions must be made to counter an enemy attack during the withdrawal. The brigade reserve may be committed by the brigade security force commander in reaction to enemy offensive actions. He may also direct counterattacks by previously disengaged units from the battalion. If the battalion elements are required, the most mobile assets available are used. Under the direction of the brigade security force commander, they reinforce or assist disengagement of the withdrawing security force. The early use of attack helicopters or close air support may preclude ground forces from having to re-engage the enemy before the withdrawal is completed.

RETIREMENT OPERATIONS

A retirement is a retrograde operation in which a force that is not in contact with the enemy moves to the rear in an organized manner. A withdrawal becomes a retirement after the force has disengaged from the enemy and march columns have been formed. A retirement may be made to:

- Occupy more favorable terrain.
- Conform to the disposition of another force.
- Permit the employment of the force in another sector.
- Increase the distance between the defender and the enemy.

Conduct of the Retirement

A battalion task force usually conducts a retirement as part of a larger force. Once maneuver units disengage from the enemy, they form into tactical march columns and continue movement. As in all tactical moves, maintain all-around security, and employ a strong guard if contact with the enemy to the rear is possible. If the enemy attacks the rear, the rear guard uses delay tactics to extend the distance between the main body and the enemy.

The execution of a retirement may have an adverse impact on the morale of friendly troops. Leadership must be positive and discipline maintained. Inform the troops of the purpose of the retirement and the future intentions of the chain of command. This will prevent rumors associated with the conduct of the retirement from spreading.

This concludes the second learning event. You should now be familiar with the concepts of planning and conducting delay, withdrawal, and retirement operations.

The next learning event will teach you the proper procedures for preparing and issuing task force warning orders and operations orders for a delay operation.

Learning Event 3:

IDENTIFY THE CIRCUMSTANCES, FORMATS, CONTENTS AND PROCEDURES FOR PREPARING AND ISSUING TASK FORCE WARNING ORDERS AND OPERATIONS ORDERS FOR A DELAY OPERATION

Adequate, practical planning and the timely preparation and distribution of simple direct orders are a key factor in the success of any military mission. This learning event provides information on the preparation of combat orders. Combat orders set forth the details of tactical operations and administration in the field. They may be issued initially as a plan to become an order at some future specified time, or as stated contingencies arise.

Realistically, the commander and staff must understand that warning orders and frag orders will be the normal means of communicating orders in combat. The battalion or task force tactical SOP can greatly reduce the verbiage contained in a written order. A good SOP will also help to expedite staff actions and priorities in the planning process.

It is the intent of this learning event to provide a guide to the preparation of combat orders for a delay operation. However, the same planning and formats are used for preparing combat orders for any mission.

TYPES OF COMBAT ORDERS

This learning event is designed to train you in the preparation of warning orders (WOs) and operations orders (OPORDs). However, there are also other type of combat orders that you should be able to recognize. The five types of combat orders are:

- Operations order (OPORD). OPORDs are directives issued to subordinate commanders to coordinate the execution of an operation. This term includes both operation orders for the conduct of tactical operations and movements. Combat support (CS) and combat service support (CSS) commanders also use OPORDs to task their units.
- Administrative/logistics order (Admin/Log). These orders provide for the coordination combat service support for a command. They are normally prepared and used at division or higher.
- Standing operating procedures (SOP). The SOP is a set of instructions which prescribe routine procedures. They are used to supplement other combat orders and have the same authority.
- Warning order (WO). Warning orders give advance notice of actions or orders that are to follow. WOs give subordinate commanders the maximum time for preparation. Warning orders have no prescribed format. They are usually brief oral or written messages.
- Fragmentary Order (FRAGO). FRAGOs are normally used to issue supplemental tactical instructions or changes while an operation is in progress. They can provide brief, specific, and timely instructions without loss of clarity. Although the FRAGO does not have a specific format, it follows the basic format of a five-paragraph operation order. However, elements that have not changed, are nonessential to the mission, may delay or complicate transmission, or are unavailable or incomplete are not included. The sender should require an acknowledgement of receipt from the intended receiver of the FRAGO.

CHARACTERISTICS OF COMBAT ORDERS

Before discussing the formats for warning orders and operation orders, it is necessary to understand the characteristics of a well prepared combat order.

Clarity

Clarity is the first and most important characteristic of a combat order. Each subordinate command or unit that receives the order or plan must be able to understand it thoroughly. Avoid highly technical language when there is danger of misinterpretation. The use of accepted military terminology and phraseology helps to convey identical meanings to using individuals.

Brevity

Avoid superfluous words and unnecessary detail. However, do not sacrifice clarity and completeness in the interest of brevity alone.

Simplicity

Reduce all elements to their simplest forms. Eliminate all possibilities for misunderstanding.

Completeness

The order or plan must contain all the information necessary to coordinate and execute the operation. However, it prescribes only those details or methods of execution necessary to make sure the actions of the subordinate units conform to the concept of operation. The order must show the intent of the commander so that subordinates can accomplish their mission without further instructions.

Recognition of Subordinate Commander's Prerogatives

The order or plan should not infringe on the initiative of subordinate commanders by prescribing details. Only in the case of overriding circumstances should a subordinate commander be told precisely how to perform an assigned task.

Use of the Affirmative Form

In the interest of simplicity and clarity, the affirmative form of expression is used throughout all combat orders. Such wording as "The trains will not accompany the battalion" is improper for two reasons. First, the intent of the order depends on the single word "not." Second, the actual disposition of the trains is not indicated. An acceptable form would be, "Trains remain in present position; move on order."

Avoid Qualified Directives

Expressions such as "attack vigorously" are meaningless and verbose. They also weaken the force of subsequent directives in which the qualifying adverb does not appear. Such expressions as "try to hold" and "as far as possible" lessen responsibility. Terms such as "main attack" are adequate and clear, not requiring further qualification.

Authoritative Expression

The order or plan reflects the commander's intention and will. Indecisive, vague, and ambiguous language indicates vacillation and indecision and leads to uncertainty and lack of confidence on the part of subordinates. Tell subordinates in direct and unmistakable terms exactly what the commander wants them to do.

Timeliness

Disseminate orders and plans in sufficient time to allow adequate planning and preparation on the part of subordinate commands. Through the use of warning orders, subordinate units can initiate their preparation before the receipt of the order. Concurrent planning conserves time. The 1/3 - 2/3 rule should be a guiding factor in adding to timeliness.

Operational Terms

Most of the following terms are found in [FM 101-5-1](#); others in this block are intended to supplement [FM 101-5-1](#) in order to support battalion task force operations.

- Organic. Assigned to and forming an essential part of a military organization; an element normally shown in the unit's TOE.
- Assigned. The relatively permanent placement of units or personnel in an organization to which it/they are not organic. The organization to which they are assigned has complete command and control authority and administration and logistics responsibility unless otherwise stated.
- Attached. The relatively temporary placement of units or personnel in an organization to which it/they are not organic. Subject to limitations imposed by the attachment order, the commander of the formation, unit, or organization receiving the attachment will exercise the same degree of command and control over these units and personnel as he does over units and personnel organic to his command. However, the responsibility for transfer and promotion of personnel will normally be retained by the parent formation, unit, or organization. The receiving unit will be responsible for logistical support of the attached elements.
- Detached Unit. A unit that is serving away from the organization to which it is organic and to which it remains assigned. A detached unit may function as an independent organization, or it may be attached to or serve with or under another organization.
- Operational Control (OPCON). The authority delegated to a commander to direct forces provided him so that he may accomplish specific missions or tasks which are usually limited by function, time, or location; and to deploy units concerned and to retain or assign tactical control of those units. It does not of itself, include administrative or logistic responsibility, discipline, internal organization, or unit training.
- Dedicated Battery. An extension of the direct support (DS) mission is to dedicate the fires of a field artillery battery solely to one maneuver company or company team in the movement to contact.
- Direct Support (DS). A mission requiring a force to support another specific force and authorizing it to answer directly the supported force's request for assistance.
- Reinforce. To strengthen a force by committing additional forces, supporting elements, or supporting fires. An artillery mission requiring one artillery unit to augment the fires of another artillery unit is called a reinforcing mission.
- General Support (GS). Support that is given to the supported force as a whole and not to any particular subdivision thereof. This mission is frequently assigned to CS and CSS units. For example, a division field artillery battalion assigned a general support mission operates under the control of the division artillery headquarters while supporting the whole division. GS is not used for organic elements.
- General Support-Reinforcing (GSR). An artillery mission requiring the unit assigned the mission to support the force as a whole and provide reinforcing fires for another artillery unit as second priority.

TECHNIQUES OF PREPARATION

In preparing combat orders, certain techniques are used for clarity and standardization of operational terms. The following paragraphs will cover these procedures.

Use of Abbreviations

It must be emphasized that you may use abbreviations to save time and space, but only if there is no loss of clarity. The use of abbreviations should be consistent throughout any plan or order. AR 310-50 contains a listing of current authorized abbreviations used within the Department of the Army.

Normally, you do not use abbreviations in any communications circulated for inter-allied use. Exceptions are abbreviations in common international use, (e.g., mm for millimeters) or abbreviations adopted by international agreement.

Designation of Units

Write the numerical designation of any Army or Air Force unit in Arabic ordinal numerals, such as: 21st Army Group, 1st Tactical Air Force (TAF), 3d Army, or 1st Logistical Command.

For corps, use Roman numerals, such as II Corps or IV Corps.

Acceptable methods of abbreviating the full designation of units follows:

1st Platoon, Company A, 1st Battalion, 61st Infantry can be abbreviated to 1/A/1-61 In, or 1st Platoon, Company B, 23d Signal Battalion may be 1/B/23 Sig.

Note that you use the slash (/) to separate each level of command that is operating in the field. Use the (--) to indicate the designation of a unit organized under the Combat Arms Regimental System (CRS). A minus sign (-) or the word "minus" indicates a unit of less than normal size and denotes detachment of an organic element.

Designation of Task Forces and Teams

There are two definitions of a task force. One is based on the mission and the other on organization. For clarity, in combat orders, refer to the one based on organization as the "battalion task force." This task force is a battalion-size unit of armor or infantry to which one or more company-size units of the other combat arms has been attached. For example, a battalion headquarters of a mechanized infantry battalion with one or more of the four organic mechanized companies and the attachment of one or more tank companies.

At the company level, refer to a temporary grouping of units as a "team." The same rules apply for its formation as for the formation of a task force, except that platoons are the basic building blocks rather than companies.

Tasks forces and teams may be designated as follows:

- Name of the commander (e.g., Task Force Anderson).
- Use of a code name (e.g., Team Cobra).
- Use of a numeral (e.g., Team 1).

- Use a letter (e.g., Task Force ALFA or Team BRAVO).
- Use of the unit designation (e.g., TF 2-11).
- Use of the unit's branch (e.g., Team Mech or TF Tank).

Designation of Places or Features

Print geographic names of definite areas (cities, towns, rivers, hills, mountains, and other places) that are named specifically on a map in CAPITAL letters. The spelling in the order must be the same as that appearing on the map. Identify hills by the word HILL, followed by the numerals of the surveyed elevation (e.g., HILL 439). Identify hills for which no surveyed elevations are shown by describing their location (e.g., hill at PV 6390).

Show the coordinates for a place or feature the first time the name appears in the order. Thereafter, repeat the coordinates only as necessary for clarity.

NOTE

The above rule does not apply to paragraph 2 (MISSION) in the body of the OPOD. This paragraph always includes the coordinates of objectives to be seized or secured, or sector/battle positions to be defended.

Describe areas by naming the northernmost point first and giving the remaining points in clockwise order. Describe positions from left to right, facing the enemy.

Identify roads and railroads either by name or by sequence of points on the road. Names should appear in the direction of movement. When there is no movement, names will appear from left to right or rear to front (as the person is facing the enemy). Designate all other lines in the same manner.

When referring to an attack on a river line, refer to the friendly shore as the "near bank" and the enemy shore as the "far bank." River banks can also be described as compass points (e.g., "North," "East").

Direction

Write compass points with a capital initial letter in place of the terms "left" or "right." If the situation indicates the advisability of including the terms "left" and "right," place the word in parentheses immediately following the compass point (e.g., East [left]). Give specific directions as angles from true, magnetic, or grid north (always specify the type used).

Date and Time

Dates will include the day, month, and year (6 August 1988). In setting a night, include both days (night 6-7 August 1988). Do not use terms such as PM, AM, daylight, dusk, EENT, and BMNT in lieu of date-time groups. Express times using the 24 hour clock system by means of a four digit Arabic number. If necessary, add a letter indicating the time zone after the last digit (1300Z).

A date-time group (DTG) is a six-digit number expressing date and time, combined with the alphabetic time zone designator. The first two digits indicate the date of the month and the last four digits indicate the time. The month and year are added to avoid confusion. A complete date-time group may appear as "241000Z August 1988."

Time Zone

Use the time zone which is applicable to the operation. Convert times in other zones to this time zone for the operation. This entry is required in all OPORDs and OPLANs. In addition, a time zone suffix will be shown following the last digit of the date-time group. For example 062025Z Aug 1988 indicates 8:25 PM Greenwich mean time, 6 Aug 1988. When the date and hour for beginning an operation are not specified in an order or plan, the following applies:

- The day on which the operation commences is known as D-day. The system is D-2, D, D+1. D-day is normally used for planned operations, and, where necessary, the code name of the operation should be added (e.g., "OVERLORD D-DAY").
- The system for numbering hours and minutes in an operation is the same as that for days, but the letter H is used. The numbering of hours is H-1 hour, H-30 minutes, H-hour, H+30 minutes, H+2 hours, etc..

Now that you are familiar with the characteristics and techniques used in preparing combat orders, you are ready to study the elements and/or format for preparing a warning order and an operations order.

ELEMENTS OF A WARNING ORDER

As mentioned previously, warning orders (WOs) follow no prescribed format. They are usually brief oral or written messages. The warning order, written or oral, may include the following elements:

- Heading. Warning orders must always begin with the words "Warning Order" so that they may be easily recognized. The addresses are also included in the heading.
- Situation. This section includes a brief description of the enemy situation, events, probable missions, tasks, or operation.
- Attachments/detachments. Include known changes to task organization. If there are no changes, then the statement "No changes to your current task organization" (or words to that effect) is included in the order.
- Earliest time of move. Tell the units the earliest possible time that they must be ready to move. Actual time of move is given if known. When the time of the move is unknown, the degree of notice is given, for example, "Effective 310800z Aug 1988, all units be prepared to move on two hours notice."
- Nature and time of the operation. Stated in sufficient detail to allow recipients to begin preparation and set priorities. It also includes orders for preliminary actions and reconnaissance. Time of the operation is stated as precisely as possible, to allow recipients to allocate time and complete preparation.
- Time and place. Subordinates are told when and where to go to receive the entire order. An SOP "Orders Group" (detailing who usually comes to receive orders) helps to shorten this process.
- Administrative/logistic information. Instructions which change support requirements, require special equipment, or direct movement to assembly areas are included.

- Acknowledgement. An acknowledgement of receipt of the order is always required to make sure it is received by all addressees.

FORMAT FOR OPORDS

OPORDs can be given written and orally. OPORDs has a standard format that should followed. All written OPORDs have a heading, a body, and an ending.

The major paragraphs are shown in capital letters and are used without punctuations (e.g., MISSION). Subparagraph headings follow the normal rule for capitalization and are followed by a period (e.g., Enemy Forces.). The second and succeeding lines of each paragraph and subparagraph should begin at the left margin.

[Figure 11](#) shows the format for an OPORD. The numbers in parentheses correspond to the number paragraphs in the text. Refer back to this format, as necessary, while completing the text material.

FIGURE 11. OPORD FORMAT

-
- (1) (CLASSIFICATION)
- (2) (No change from oral orders)
- (3) Copy No. ____ of ____ copies
 (4) Issuing Unit
 (5) Place of issue
 (6) Date-time group
 (7) Message reference number
- (8) OPORD or OPLAN Number
- (9) REFERENCES:
- (10) Time Zone Used Throughout the Order.
- (11) Task Organization.
- (12) 1. SITUATION.
 b. Enemy Forces.
 c. Friendly Forces.
 d. Attachments and Detachments.
 e. Assumptions. (Only in Operation Plans)
- (13) 2. MISSION.
- (14) 3. EXECUTION.
 a. Concept of Operation, Commanders Intent.
 (1) Maneuver.
 (2) Fires.
 (3) Obstacles, mines, fortification.
 Specific tasks for subordinate attached or supporting units.
 b. Im A:
 c. Im Tank:
 d. Co C:
 e. Co D:
 f. Scout Platoon:
 g. Mortar Platoon:
 h. GSR
 i. ADA
 j. Engr
 k. Include one subparagraph for each attached, supporting, or
 OPCON element such as stinger teams, AVL8, etc.
 1. The reserve, if designated, is always listed just before
 coordinating instructions.
 m. Coordinating Instructions:
- (15) 4. SERVICE SUPPORT.
 a. General.
 b. Materiel and Services.
 c. Medical Evacuation and Hospitalization.
 d. Personnel.
 e. Civil-Military Cooperation.
 f. Miscellaneous.
- (16) 5. COMMAND AND SIGNAL.
 a. Command.

 b. Signal.
- (17) Acknowledge:
- (18) (Commander)
- (19) Authentication:
- (20) Annex:
- (21) Distribution

(1) (CLASSIFICATION)

Heading

The heading of the OPORD contains the following elements:

Classification. The degree of security classification is shown at the top and bottom of each page of the order. [(1) on OPORD format.]

"No Change to Oral Orders". Each staff officer having responsibility in the preparation of the OPORD provides the S3 with the status of oral orders pertaining to his activity. If no oral orders were issued, this comment will be left out. If there were oral orders, such expressions as "No change to oral orders" or "No change from oral orders except for paragraph_____" will be used as appropriate. [(2) on OPORD format.]

Copy Number. Copy numbers are assigned by S3 for accountability and must be shown. [(3) on OPORD format.]

Issuing Unit. Enter the unit issuing the order. [(4) on OPORD format.]

Place of Issue. Enter the name of an easily recognized geographical feature that is nearest to the issuing headquarter's command post. Show coordinates of command post in parenthesis, and the state/country. [(5) on OPORD format.]

Date-time Group. This is the time the order is signed and effective unless otherwise stated in the body of the order. It is also the date and time when attachments become effective (unless a different effective time is shown under the task organization or attachments and detachments paragraphs). The date-time group must include the time zone suffix. [(6) on OPORD format.]

Message Reference Number. This number is assigned by the S3 for acknowledging and referring to the order in the clear. [(7) on OPORD format.]

Operation Order Number. This number is also assigned by the S3. Numbers run serially throughout the year. [(8) on OPORD format.]

References. List any maps, charts, or other documents required to understand the order. References to a map will include the map series number, sheet number and name, edition, and scale. [(9) on OPORD format.]

Time Zone Used Throughout the Order. Use the time zone applicable to the operation. Times in other zones are converted to this time zone for this operation. [(10) on OPORD format.]

Task Organization. The task organization indicates the internal organization or tactical groupings for mission accomplishment. The task organization is developed by the S3, based on the commander's decision and concept and the staff estimates. The task reorganization will also depict command and support relationships between units or elements. It may also list names or titles assigned to tactical groupings [(11) on OPORD format.]

The task organization may be listed in three places in the OPORD:

- Immediately preceding paragraph 1 (SITUATION) (this is normally the method for brigade level and below).

- In paragraph 3 (EXECUTION).
- As a separate annex.

The following rules apply to listing units and elements in the OPORD:

- Major subordinate units. The sequence of listing major subordinate units in the task organization is alphabetical or numerical. Sequence is also determined by whether the unit is a combat, combat support, or combat service support unit. Battalion task forces and company teams precede branch pure units. Combat units are listed in the following order: infantry, mechanized infantry, air assault, airborne, and armor. The specific organization of each major subordinate unit is shown by indenting subordinate units under the command and control headquarters heading. The indentation shows that a unit is organic, assigned, or attached. Use a parenthetical expression to denote a different relationship, such as (OPCON) for a unit under operational control or (DS) for direct support.

NOTE

The use of DS in the task organization does not indicate a mission assignment to the supported unit. It denotes a support relationship. Mission assignments will be addressed in paragraph 3 of the OPORD (EXECUTION).

- Control groupings. In addition to the major subordinate units listings, control groupings are also shown in the task organization. As appropriate, BN CON is used for units under battalion control and TF CON is used for units under the control of the task force. Combat support elements supporting the task force would be listed indented under this heading. The following units are not listed in the task reorganization:
 - Units which are in general support of the higher headquarters.
 - Artillery units which are reinforcing or general support reinforcing to the task force's DS artillery.

These units are not under the direct control of the supported unit commander and thus are not listed under TF control.

- Combat service support (CSS) elements. At battalion level, combat service support elements are listed under a separate heading of BN TNS or TF TNS. Any external CSS elements supporting the headquarters would be listed indented under this heading. At company level, a trains lifting is optional, based on the commander's discretion.
- Detached units. The use of the minus symbol (-) following the units heading indicates a subelement has been detached. The detached element will be found in the task organization under another major unit heading. If the detached subelement has been removed from the control for the task force completely, it will be noted in paragraph 1c (Attachments and Detachments).
- Command relationship. A command relationship is established between an attached element and a headquarters. The supported commander cannot impose a more restrictive command

relationship when suballocating that element to one of his subordinate units. For example, a unit placed OPCON to a task force cannot be attached to a company team since an attachment is more restrictive than OPCON.

Body

The body of the OPORD contains five main paragraphs. They are:

- Situation.
- Mission.
- Execution.
- Service Support.
- Command and Signal.

Each main paragraph is broken down into subparagraphs. Instructions for completing each main paragraph and subparagraph are as follows.

Situation. This paragraph provides an overview for the general situation. The situation always contains three subparagraphs: Enemy Forces, Friendly Forces, and Attachments and Detachments. [(12) on OPORD format.]

- Enemy Forces (subparagraph 1a). This subparagraph contains enemy information only. This information is provided by the unit intelligence officer. It is normally limited to those essential items necessary for the accomplishment of the mission. Information presented in this subparagraph will be stated in terms of enemy situation (composition, disposition, morale, supply status, estimated strength); enemy capabilities (NBC, air superiority); and most probable course of action. Reference may be made to an intelligence annex, intelligence summary (INTSUM), or similar document if the data is too detailed or lengthy for the subparagraph.
- Friendly Forces (subparagraph 1b). This subparagraph contains the verbatim mission statements of higher, adjacent, and supporting or reinforcing units listed in the following sequence:
 - The mission of the next higher headquarters (in a task force OPORD, the brigade mission).
 - The adjacent units are listed in sequence left, right, front, and rear (a division covering force would be listed as a unit to the front).
 - Units which are supporting or reinforcing the next higher headquarters. (Units supporting the headquarters issuing the orders are stated in the task organization and not in paragraph 1b.)
- Attachments and Detachments (subparagraph 1c). When not shown in the tasks organization, units attached to or detached from the issuing headquarters are listed. Additionally, if a unit is to be attached or detached after the effective time of the OPORD it will also be listed. In this case, the effective time and/or conditions under which the change in status will occur will be included

(e.g., upon seizing OBJ RAMROD, TM B release one AT platoon back to Co E; OR 2/B/326 Engr attached effective 231200A Nov 88).

If the task organization depicts all attachments and detachments, it is sufficient to reference: Task Organizations.

- Assumptions (subparagraph 1d). This subparagraph will be included as a subparagraph only when preparing operational plans (OPLANs). It will include those situations/conditions that a commander believes will exist at the time the OPLAN becomes an OPOD.

Mission (Paragraph 2). The mission is a clear, concise statement of the tasks to be accomplished by the issuing unit and its purpose. The mission statement is derived from the commander's mission analysis during the decision making process. It addresses the WHO, WHAT, WHERE, and WHY of the operation. At battalion level and below, all of the mission essential tasks (critical to the success of the operation as determined by the commander) to be accomplished are normally addressed. The mission is always stated in full and must stand alone without reference statement. In addressing the WHERE of the operation, it will always list the terrain feature and grid coordinates. The terms "OBJECTIVE" and "Battle Position" may also be included if desired, but must be related to terrain features or grid coordinates. In a sector defense mission statement, the WHERE may also be expressed in terms of grid coordinates which define the corners of the sector. [(13) on OPOD format.]

Execution (Paragraph 3). The execution paragraph contains the HOW TO information needed for mission accomplishment. [(14) on OPOD format.]

This paragraph will consist of three elements: concept of the Operation, Subordinate Units, and Coordinating Instructions. Each subparagraph will be discussed below.

- Concept of the Operation, Commander's Intent (Subparagraph 3a). The concept of the operation is a statement of the commander's visualization of the operation from start to completion. It accurately provides subordinates the commander's intent. The concept clarifies the purpose of the operations. It is stated in sufficient detail to ensure a thorough understanding of the commander's intent and the appropriate actions by subordinates. It is derived primarily from the commander's decision developed during the decision-making process.

The concept will address the close-in battle, deep battle, and rear area operations. Normally, the deep and rear battles will be discussed in detail for brigade and higher units. The concept may be written as a single paragraph, divided into subparagraphs, phases or, if lengthy, it may be prepared as an annex.

Style is not emphasized at the expense of substance, but clarity and conciseness must prevail. Always use plain language. The amount and detail should be sufficient to indicate what is to be accomplished by the force as a whole. The concept of the operation always includes the scheme of maneuver and plan of fire support. It may also include a discussion of any support assets (obstacles, mines, fortifications, intelligence, electronic warfare, etc.) which the commander desires to discuss, based on its impact on his scheme of maneuver. Considerations for each of the above components are as follows:

- Scheme of Maneuver. This part of the subparagraph will describe the movement or placement of all major subordinate maneuver elements with the task force. In the

offense, the scheme of maneuver will include all objectives for each maneuver element. In the defense, the scheme of maneuver will include the sectors or battle positions designated for each maneuver element. Designation of a reserve will also be included in this part of the concept for any type of mission. Normally, reference will be made to the operations overlay in this part of the concept.

- Plan of Fire Support. This part of the subparagraph complements and supports the scheme of maneuver. It includes the priority of fire, priority targets, FPFs (final protective fires), and preparatory fires. It will also include the start time and duration of any special fires, such as nuclear, chemical, smoke operations, or close air support. Only in direct fires are addressed in this portion of the concept. Normally, reference is made to the fire support annex here.
- Obstacles, mines, and fortifications. These items may be included in the concept of operations, especially for defensive operations. It includes a brief discussion of the commander's intent or general thrust of the obstacle plan and how it directly relates to his scheme of maneuver. Additionally, priorities of obstacle work and type of operations (mobility, countermobility, and survivability) may also be addressed. Detailed information in relation to an obstacle plan would be included in a separate annex and referred to here.
- Intelligence and electronic warfare (IEW). IEW may be included in the concept and includes a brief discussion of the commander's intelligence collection and electronic warfare priorities. It will also tell how they impact on the scheme of maneuver. For example, a task force commander may attach more surveillance assets to a particular area because of its criticality to the success of the operation.
- Other support activities. Other aspects of the concept which may be included are suppression of enemy air defense (SEAD), air defense fires, and rear area protection. These may be included, based on the commander's assessment of their impact on his scheme of maneuver.
- Subordinate Units (subparagraphs 3b through 3m). Beginning with subparagraph 3b, the specific tasks to be accomplished by each subordinate element of the task force will be listed in a separate lettered subparagraph. The units will normally be listed alphabetically or numerically in order of decreasing size and type of unit (infantry, mechanized infantry, air assault, airborne, and armor). Subordinate teams (combined arms elements) will normally precede breach pure elements in sequence. Additionally, maneuver units will precede combat support and combat service support units. At battalion level and below, all units or elements which appear in the task organization as major subordinate units or as under task force control will have their own subparagraphs. Exceptions to this rule are trains elements (which will be addressed in paragraph 4) and units in reserve (which will be addressed in the reserve subparagraph of paragraph 3).

If necessary for clarity reasons, instructions presented in the concept of operations may be repeated in the subordinate unit subparagraphs. Instructions found in the subordinate unit subparagraphs are limited to those tasks which apply to a particular unit and only that unit. If a commander has no further

instructions to issue to a subordinate unit (other than what has appeared in the concept of operation or is listed in the coordinating instructions), then one of two options may be used:

- The unit name will be listed in the appropriate sequence followed by the word "None."
- The unit followed by a blank space.

In addition to the listing of units, several other items may appear in the subordinate unit subparagraphs of OPODs from brigade level or higher. These subparagraphs may include fire support, air defense, engineer, and electronic warfare.

- Fire support subparagraph. Normally used in brigade and higher orders only; follows the last maneuver unit subparagraph in sequence. This subparagraph may contain a discussion of the following items: air support, chemical, field artillery (organization and special instruction), naval gunfire, and nuclear fires. This subparagraph is not the same as the plan of fire support discussed under the concept of operation and does not substitute for a discussion of fire support in the concept.
- Paragraphs entitled "air defense", "engineer", and "electronic warfare" may be used in brigade and higher headquarters orders instead of a listing of the particular combat support unit by name. The unit itself would be listed under the general heading with its specific instruction.
- Reserve subparagraph (paragraph 31). This subparagraph, when required, is always listed directly before the coordinating instructions. It is used in the OPOD for all units company level or higher. If no reserve is planned, the word "None" will be shown. A unit which is totally in reserve during the operation will appear only in this subparagraph and the concept of operation. It will not have a separate subparagraph. Units which have tasks in addition to the reserve mission will appear first in their normal subparagraph and then again in the reserve subparagraph. In this case, the reserve subparagraph will contain the reserve mission and the time/condition for reverting to the reserve role.
- Coordinating Instruction (subparagraph 3m). This is the last subparagraph of execution. It contains details of coordination and control applicable to two or more elements of the task force (with the exception of signal items, which are covered in paragraph 5). When there are no coordinating instructions, the word "none" is shown.

Typical items included in the coordinating instructions are:

- Reports to be made that are other than SOP.
- NBC troop safety instructions and operational exposure guidance (OEG).
- Mission oriented protective posture (MOPP) levels if different from SOP.
- Air defense criteria.
- Consolidation/reorganization instructions.
- Priority intelligence requirements (PIR) if not stated in an intelligence annex.
- Passage of lines coordination.

- Effective DTG of attachments/detachments if not listed in the task organization or paragraph 1c.
- Effective DTG or conditions on which the order becomes effective when not effective upon receipt.
- Reference to annexes included in the order not previously mentioned in the body of the order.

Service Support (Paragraph 4). This paragraph contains combat services support instructions and information relating to the operation. At higher echelons (division and above), service support information is incorporated in a separate administrative/logistic order. At brigade and battalion level, units will often prepare a service support annex which will outline CSS functions. Reference to the admin/log order or the annex will be made in this paragraph. [(15) on OPORD format.]

There is no doctrinal format for this paragraph; however, the administrative logistics order format is recommended as follows:

- Materiel and Service. Status of classes of supply, transportation, services, and maintenance.
- Medical evacuation and hospitalization.
- Personnel. Unit strengths, replacements, maintenance of morale, discipline, law and order, headquarters management.
- Civil-military cooperation. Limitations or restrictions concerning local area; psychological operations.
- Prisoner of war (POW) procedures.
- Locations and proposed locations of CSS facilities (if not shown on a graphic overlay).

Command and Signal (Paragraph 5). This paragraph contains instructions and information relating to command and communications-electronics (CE) functions. It will contain two subparagraphs entitled "Command" and "Signal" in that sequence. [(16) on OPORD format.]

- Command (subparagraph 5a). As a minimum, this subparagraph will include the initial location of the commander. This will facilitate messenger operations if it becomes necessary. It may also include the command post locations, if not shown graphically, and the CP axis of displacement. Succession of command may be shown if different from the SOP.
- Signal (subparagraph 5b). As a minimum, this subparagraph will list the CEOI (communication-electronics operating instructions) index by the specific number in effect for the operation. It should also list any CEOI changes scheduled during the period of operations. It may list alternate or emergency signals (pyrotechnics, etc.), and signal restrictions (e.g., radio listening silence). Detailed signal instructions will normally be listed in a CE annex.

Ending

The ending of the OPORD is comprised of five elements: the acknowledgement, the commander's signature, the authentication, an annex listing, and the distribution.

Acknowledge. This section directs the recipient of the order to acknowledge receipt. Acknowledgement may be made in the clear, using the message reference number contained in the OPORD heading. Any instructions pertaining to acknowledging the receipt of the order may be listed. [(17) on OPORD format.]

Signature. The commander or his authorized representative signs the original copy for the OPORD. [(18) on OPORD format.]

Authentication. If the commander's signature cannot be reproduced, the S3 authenticates subsequent copies of the order. Annexes issued with the order do not require a signature or authentication. Annexes issued separately require a signature or authentication in the same manner as the order. Authentication is performed by the primary staff officer responsible for the annex. [(19) on OPORD format.]

Annexes. Annexes are lettered alphabetically and are listed in the order in which they appear in the OPORD. The S3 designates the letter to be associated with a given annex. Annexes are prepared by the appropriate officer having staff responsibility for the activity, arm, or service covered by the annex. When an annex is to be issued later, the parenthetical phrase "(to be issued)" is shown following the listing of the annex. [(20) on OPORD format.]

Distribution. Establish distribution in coordination with other appropriate staff officers. Distribution must also be made to adjacent, supporting, and attached units not included in SOP distribution. [(21) on OPORD format.]

NOTE

Due to the rapid, dynamic nature of the modern battlefield, the TF OPORD may be written initially in one copy and passed orally to subordinate commanders.

OVERLAYS

Overlays techniques involve the use of military symbols to portray, in a condensed form, the plans, orders, and information concerning the military situation. The entry of control measures should be kept to a minimum in order not to clutter the overlay. However, it should be detailed sufficiently to convey the meaning of paragraph 3 (Execution) of the OPORD. [FM 101-5-1](#) is the base document for preparation of overlays. A sample overlay for a defense operation is shown in [figure 12](#).

When the overlay and the written portion of the order are separate documents:

- The overlay is an annex when it is issued as an integral part of the order and has the same distribution as the order. It need only be identified by title and headquarters (e.g., Annex A (Operations Overlay) to OPORD 2, TF 2-11).
- A reference to the overlay annex is contained within the written portion of the order.

FIGURE 12. DEFENSE OPERATIONS OVERLAY

- A single heading and ending serve both the overlay and the written portion.
- No reference to the overlay is required in the written portion.

- Green. Friendly or enemy, man-made obstacles.
- Red.
 - Enemy units.
 - Friendly restrictive fire control measures

- Yellow. Friendly or enemy areas of NBC contamination.

● If other colors are used, a suitable explanation in the margin or legend is given.

- If only one color is available, friendly symbols are outlined with single lines, enemy with double lines.

Grid Register Marks. Trace the grid intersections nearest the two opposite corners of the overlay and label each with the proper grid coordinates. These register marks show the person who receives the overlay exactly where it fits on the map. Without them, it is difficult if not impossible to orient the overlay.

TASK FORCE OPERATIONS ORDER

A comprehensive and detailed OPORD of a type that would be prepared if time and facilities were available is shown in Appendix A which follows. However, SOPs and mission-type orders should be used to simplify the preparation of orders as much as possible.

This concludes the second and final lesson. You should now be familiar with the procedures for identifying the planning considerations, procedures, operational methods, and techniques for conducting retrograde operations.

If you have any questions concerning the material in this lesson, go back and reread the text. When you are ready, complete the practice exercise for this lesson.

PRACTICE EXERCISE 2

INSTRUCTIONS

The following items will test your knowledge of the material covered in this lesson. There is only one correct answer for each item. **When you have completed the exercise, print this page and check your answers with the answer key that follows.** If you answer any question incorrectly, study again that part of the lesson which contains the portion involved.

SITUATION: You are a battalion task force commander conducting a defensive operation against an enemy force. The present tactical situation requires that you begin planning for and conducting retrograde operations for your task force.

1. In planning a delay operation, you should assign sectors of responsibility down to the
 - ☐ A. squad level.
 - ☐ B. platoon level.
 - ☐ C. company team level.
 - ☐ D. battalion level.

2. In planning a delay on alternate positions, you develop the plan so that one element occupies the initial delay position. You task the other element to
 - ☐ A. stand in reserve as reinforcements.
 - ☐ B. prepare and occupy a second delay position.
 - ☐ C. move to the rear and man critical chokepoints.
 - ☐ D. act as the security force.

3. During a delay operation, an element under your control has become decisively engaged. It is necessary to increase the combat power of the unit. To do this in the most rapid and responsive way, you
- ☐ A. allocate priority of all indirect supporting fires to the threatened element.
 - ☐ B. direct adjacent units to engage enemy targets forward of the threatened element.
 - ☐ C. reposition combat and combat support units to reinforce the threatened element.
 - ☐ D. conduct a rapid yet cautious counterattack to disengage the threatened element.
4. You are developing plans for the reconstitution of forces for a delay operation. In planning the chain of command, you
- ☐ A. ensure that the chain of command is more than two deep.
 - ☐ B. ascertain that a replacement for each command officer is available in reserve.
 - ☐ C. verify that all officers are prepared to assume a command position in another unit, as required.
5. In planning a withdrawal, you must plan for three phases. The three phases of a withdrawal are the
- ☐ A. planning phase, movement phase, and the recovery phase.
 - ☐ B. disengagement phase, retrograde phase, and the reorganization phase.
 - ☐ C. planning phase, operational phase, and the reorganization phase.
 - ☐ D. preparatory phase, disengagement phase, and the security phase.
6. You are conducting a withdrawal not under enemy pressure. You must ensure effective command and control measures during the withdrawal. To do this, you
- ☐ A. advise each company to conduct its own reconnaissance with its key leaders.
 - ☐ B. must maintain air reconnaissance of the withdrawal route at all times.
 - ☐ C. give specific, detailed operational instructions to each subordinate commander.
 - ☐ D. establish a detachment left in contact (DLIC) command post to provide control against enemy pursuit.

7. As the commander, you should prescribe specific control measures to maintain order during a withdrawal under pressure. The control measures you could use are: (name three control measures).

8. You are conducting a retirement operation. Your unit has disengaged from the enemy. You should now
- ☐ A. inform all personnel to advance toward the marshaling area by individual routes.
 - ☐ B. form into tactical march columns and continue movement.
 - ☐ C. establish security positions for the security of the withdrawing DLIC.
 - ☐ D. release all security forces to their parent unit.

Questions 9 through 15: You are preparing an operation order (OPORD) for a retrograde operation. It is important that you place the required data in the proper paragraph of the OPORD.

MATCH THE REQUIRED DATA WITH THE PROPER PARAGRAPH OR SECTION OF THE OPORD.

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|
| A. Heading | D. Execution (Para 3) |
| B. Situation (Para 1) | E. Service Support (Para 4) |
| C. Mission (Para 2) | F. Command and Signal (Para 5) |
| | G. Ending |

9. Contains communications-electronic operating instruction index of the operation.
10. Contains the S3's authentication of the order.
11. Contains the message reference number.
12. Contains the statement of the tasks to be accomplished by the issuing unit.
13. Contains units which are supporting or reinforcing the next higher headquarters.
14. May contain data on medical evacuation and hospitalization.
15. Contains the commander's scheme of maneuver.